



Expensive, unhealthy fare at food fests set tongues wagging

Academics express concern over rise of junk food vendors at events where visitors readily pay premium prices for trendy experience and not product.

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Man loses RM9.47m in crypto scam

Retired engineer in Johor duped after taking part in non-existent online investment scheme that promised returns of 50 times amount invested.

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COLOURS OF PROSPERITY ...
Visitors browsing decorative merchandise at Petaling Street in Kuala Lumpur ahead of Chinese New Year on Jan 29. - ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

Cashless drive records 138 million transactions

Over 80 federal agencies added to campaign to speed up adoption of digital payments in public sector, says deputy minister.

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Job seeking graduates grapple with skills mismatch

Career specialist cites lack of awareness about career options and limited understanding on how skills can be applied across different industries.

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**FASCINATING CREATIONS ...**

The Tengku Permaisuri of Selangor Tengku Permaisuri Norashikin (centre), accompanied by the wife of the Selangor Menteri Besar, Datin Seri Masdiana Muhamad (left), viewing an exhibition held in conjunction with the launch of the book *Telepuk, Forgotten Flowers of Gold* at the Raja Tun Uda Library in Shah Alam yesterday. —BERNAMAPIC

Nation to address waste trafficking

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will address waste trafficking at the regional and global levels in its capacity as Asean Chair this year, said Investment, Trade and Industry Deputy Minister Liew Chin Tong.

He said Asean would have to expedite efforts towards a circular economy and low-carbon model while considering the varying capacities of each member country.

"However, Malaysia cannot work alone. We need to engage and collaborate at both the intra and inter-regional levels to harmonise policies, share expertise and address common challenges such as waste trafficking," he said yesterday at the "Technical Seminar: Waste Trafficking and Circular Economy", organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Liew said it was crucial that source countries, especially in Europe and North America, take leadership in curbing waste trafficking.

"Malaysia acknowledges the efforts put in by the European Union (EU) in this aspect, and we would like to deepen collaboration with the EU and other source countries to address this issue. We would like to see more forthcoming efforts by other source countries."

Liew said waste trafficking solutions were intertwined with circular economy adoption, including Malaysia's approach in transitioning to Extended Producer Responsibility schemes, to ensure that producers are accountable for managing their waste.

"We cannot take lightly the security aspect of waste trafficking. Less waste trafficking means a safer Malaysia, a safer Asean and a safer world. The Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry remains committed to fostering sustainable trade and supporting Malaysia's green transformation." — Bernama

'Boleh 4.0' campaign records 139m transactions

➤ Drive aims to boost cashless ecosystem, digital payments in public sector and encourage use of electronic transfer methods, says deputy minister

PUTRAJAYA: A total of 138,817,425 cashless transactions have been recorded during the National Cashless Boleh 4.0 campaign, which ran from Dec 1, 2023 to Nov 30, 2024, said Finance Deputy Minister Lim Hui Ying.

She said the transactions account for 86% of the total for the 20 government agencies involved.

"As we move towards Cashless Boleh 5.0 this year, I am pleased to announce the additional involvement of over 80 federal agencies in this campaign.

"This is an important step towards strengthening the country's cashless payment ecosystem," she said at the award presentation ceremony for the Cashless Boleh 4.0 campaign and the launch of Cashless Boleh 5.0 yesterday.

The campaign is a collaboration between Payments Network Malaysia Sdn Bhd and the Finance Ministry, aimed at accelerating the adoption of digital payments in Malaysia's

public sector.

It also aims to encourage the public to use electronic payment methods such as MyDebit, FPX, JomPAY, DirectDebit and DuitNow QR when interacting with government agencies.

Lim said the campaign is an initiative with a significant impact on the digital financial transformation of Malaysia, aiming to also upgrade the country's digital infrastructure and achieve international standards of excellence.

"Through enhanced security and efficiency in financial transactions as a result of the effectiveness of this campaign, we are able to modernise the public sector to provide government services that are easier, more transparent and systematic for all Malaysians."

She said the development of digital payments aligns with the government's digital transformation as outlined in the Malaysian

Digital Economy Framework or the MyDigital Economy Blueprint, Bernama reported.

The MyDigital initiative represents government aspirations to transform Malaysia into a high-income nation driven by digitalisation and become a regional leader in the digital economy.

"Therefore, the implementation of cashless payments is a necessity in today's world to enhance the security, efficiency and accessibility of services offered by the government.

"It simultaneously makes it easier for the public to make transactions faster and more securely, whether at the domestic or global level.

"This approach also reflects the Madani economic policy, which prioritises technological progress and openness."

Lim presented awards to high performing participants of the Cashless Boleh 4.0 campaign, including the Social Security Organisation, which was recognised as the Best Participant in Category A for federal agencies, having recorded more than five million transactions.

Also receiving recognition were the state governments of Penang, Selangor and Perlis in Category D, which covers state government agencies participating in the campaign.

UAE companies urged to invest in Malaysia

ABU DHABI: Malaysia welcomes companies from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to invest in Malaysian renewable energy (RE) projects, including data centres, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said during his three-day working visit to the UAE, he held meetings with the country's sovereign wealth fund companies.

Anwar said during the meeting with UAE state-owned renewables firm Masdar, the UAE government said it would facilitate Masdar's investment plans in Malaysia through joint ventures with local companies for green energy projects, infrastructure, battery storage and strengthening the energy grid.

"For the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, this involves projects related to the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 and the Madani Economy framework, as well as projects in the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone, such as advanced manufacturing.

"It also includes infrastructure development, green technology, RE, logistics, healthcare, the digital economy and education," he said at a media conference at the end of his UAE visit. — Bernama

Asean chairmanship to benefit grassroots communities

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia's Asean chairmanship will extend beyond high-level meetings and encompass a range of programmes aimed at engaging communities at the grassroots level across the country, said Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Amran Mohamed Zin.

He said a total of 29 programmes have been specifically designed to benefit various segments of society, including rural communities, MSMEs, youth, women, people with

disabilities, senior citizens and children, ensuring that all groups gain from the chairmanship.

The programmes include a campaign to promote Malaysian made goods, the Asean Plus Three Forum to empower rural women, Asean Youth Summit, Malaysia International Halal Showcase as well as initiatives tailored for school and higher education students.

"Priority will be given to ensuring that the initiatives and decisions put forward by Prime Minister Datuk Seri

Anwar Ibrahim and the government are executed effectively, so that the Asean chairmanship delivers tangible benefits to the people.

"This is a national agenda which calls for the participation of all Malaysians and society as a whole," he said on Tuesday at a media conference on the Asean chairmanship.

Amran said all planned activities and programmes align with the vision of a people-centred Asean community and the

chairmanship's theme — "inclusivity and sustainability".

He added that a total of 357 Asean related meetings are scheduled to take place nationwide this year, including 14 high-level meetings involving heads of state and government.

Amran said the 46th Asean Summit is slated for mid-year, alongside the Asean-Gulf Cooperation Council-China Summit, while the 47th Asean Summit would be held at the end of the year.

"In Langkawi, we will host 50 Asean meetings, Penang will hold 37 and other states will also play host.

"These events require extensive logistical preparations.

"Our aim is to bring Asean closer to the grassroots level, allowing member countries to appreciate Malaysia's rich diversity while providing opportunities for local communities to gain better awareness of Asean and benefit from business and tourism prospects." — Bernama

TikTok trend sparks discussion on career mismatches

► Better guidance, industry collaboration and education reforms proposed as many graduates lack awareness on options

■ BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM
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PETALING JAYA: A TikTok trend has recently been widely circulated, with users sharing their academic achievements, from UPSR to master's degrees, alongside their current careers.

Surprisingly, many reveal they work in fields entirely unrelated to their studies, sparking widespread discussion about the causes of career mismatches in Malaysia.

Asia Pacific Career Development Association (APCDA) board director and National Career Development Centre Association (NACDA) former president Baktiar Hasnan said many graduates lack awareness of the variety of career options available to them.

He noted they have limited understanding of how their skills can be applied across different industries.

"Some graduates choose jobs out of necessity rather than interest, highlighting the need for better career planning and market forecasting," he said.

Baktiar added that stagnant growth in certain industries often forces graduates to pivot to unrelated fields.

"When industries experience stagnation, graduates are forced to explore other sectors. To address this, we must improve labour market intelligence, align education curricula with industry needs, and develop reskilling and upskilling programmes for graduates to adapt to emerging fields."

He also pointed out that Malaysia's career guidance system, while improving, still lacks uniformity and accessibility.

"Strengths include government initiatives such as MyFutureJobs and TalentCorp's programmes. However, weaknesses such as limited training for career counsellors and a lack of integration between career services and labour

market trends persist," he said.

Baktiar believes career guidance should ideally start in primary school, focusing on self-awareness and exploration.

"Secondary school students should learn about industries and career pathways, while higher education must integrate hands-on learning experiences such as internships and industry projects," he said.

According to Baktiar, organisations such as NACDA Malaysia and APCDA can play crucial roles in bridging the gap between education and employment.

"They can act as catalysts,

promoting research, best practices and collaboration among stakeholders. Hosting conferences, developing certifications for career counsellors and advocating policies that integrate career development into education and workforce planning are some ways they can contribute," he said.

Baktiar emphasised that a strong partnership between industries and education providers is essential for addressing mismatches.

"Regular communication about skills requirements, co-creating curricula and providing hands-on learning experiences such as apprenticeships are vital. Industry players can also sponsor career fairs, offer mentorships and provide insights on future trends," he said.

He highlighted mismatches in industries such as engineering, IT and healthcare, where demand for highly specialised roles often exceeds the supply of qualified candidates.

Conversely, sectors such as business administration are oversaturated, creating employment challenges for graduates.

Addressing career mismatches requires systemic change, better career guidance and stronger education-industry collaboration.

"Career development is about creating lifelong pathways that align with one's values, strengths and passions. It involves continuous growth, acquiring transferable skills and adapting to evolving market trends. Beyond employment, it encompasses personal fulfilment, contribution to society and achieving a sense of purpose," he said.

Baktiar stressed that these efforts must be part of an integrated talent development ecosystem, where education, industry and government initiatives work cohesively to prepare students for their professional journeys.



Baktiar said stagnant growth in certain industries often forces graduates to pivot to unrelated fields.

— AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN

Sarawak premier thanks PM for recognising Petros' role

KUCHING: Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg has expressed his appreciation to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for recognising Petroleum Sarawak Bhd (Petros) as the sole gas aggregator in Sarawak.

In a statement yesterday, Abang Johari said the Sarawak government, together with Petros, is committed to working closely with the federal government and Petronas to ensure the smooth execution of Petros' role.

"I wish to express my deepest appreciation to the prime minister for the statement he made during

his press conference in Abu Dhabi regarding the Petronas-Petros issue, which, among others, clearly recognises and acknowledges Petros as the sole gas aggregator in Sarawak," he said.

He added that the collaboration would ensure an uninterrupted gas supply for consumers, including investors, which is vital for Sarawak's economic progress.

"The Sarawak government also appreciates the roles of the federal government and Petronas in resolving this issue. This would enhance collaboration between the federal and Sarawak governments,

Petronas and Petros," he said.

Abang Johari noted that such strategic collaborations would drive Malaysia, and Sarawak in particular, towards becoming an energy hub.

"This cooperation will enhance Malaysia's global competitiveness in attracting investments, technological research and new industries, particularly petrochemical derivatives, and aligns with the creation of high-paying jobs and the nation's economic growth," he said.

Anwar said on Tuesday that issues related to Petronas and Petros regarding gas distribution rights in

Sarawak had been resolved through a series of negotiations, including his meeting with Abang Johari on January 1.

He said that while Petros has been granted authority as a gas aggregator, it will not interfere with Petronas' existing operations.

"Petronas retains its authority nationwide but allows Sarawak control over gas distribution for domestic purposes. This exemplifies cooperation between the two entities," he said during a press conference at the conclusion of his visit to the United Arab Emirates. — Bernama

UiTM denies forced participation in Islamic activity

SHAH ALAM: Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) has denied claims that non-Muslim students were forced to participate in an Islamic programme during its Identity and Spirituality Camp Series 20 on Jan 11.

In a statement, the university said the programme – held at Masjid Al-Wathiqu Billah Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin, UiTM Shah Alam – involved 2,447 first-semester students, including 34 non-Muslim students from the Kesatria Negara 1, Kembara 1 and Pancaragam 1 co-curricular courses.

"The carefully planned activities, which focused on character, intellectual and spiritual development, reflect UiTM's commitment to producing well-rounded students with integrity who are ready to contribute to society," the statement read.

According to UiTM, Muslim students attended a lecture on funeral management in the mosque's main hall, while non-Muslim students participated in a talk on social ethics at Dewan Mukhtar from 2.30pm, Bernama reported.

"The social ethics talk aimed to provide an understanding of ethical values in social settings, such as at home, in the workplace and in public spaces.

"After the talk, non-Muslim students were treated to afternoon tea before being allowed to return home," the statement added.

UiTM said the decision to use the mosque and Dewan Mukhtar as venues was made to facilitate management, save time and logistical resources, and ensure participants could engage in the activities without disruptions.

More experts needed for building software

KUALA LUMPUR: Building Information Modelling (BIM) software needs to be developed by more local experts to reduce costs and optimise its use in the nation's construction industry, said Deputy Works Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Maslan.

He said the current cost of BIM software is RM10,000 per user annually, with cost in Sarawak reaching RM18,000.

"The challenge we face in enhancing BIM implementation is the high cost of the software.

"Therefore, I encourage more parties, including Pertubuhan BIM, to participate in creating their own BIM modules and software, so it can be better utilised," he said when closing the "JKR BIM Tour 2024: Trail Training Lectures for the Central Zone" programme yesterday.

At a press conference afterwards, Ahmad said the Public Works Department, through its Strategic Plan 2021-2025, has set a target of implementing BIM in 50% of projects valued above RM10 million, with a 10% increase annually. — Bernama



Overpriced, unhealthy fare at food festivals raise concern

➤ Line between fair charges and exploitation depends on how much rates exceed costs borne by vendors: Academic

BY QIRANA NABILLA
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PETALING JAYA: Overpriced and unhealthy offerings at Malaysian food festivals have become a common concern, with vendors often prioritising profits over the quality and nutritional value of their products.

Despite the high prices, visitors continue to be drawn to the festive atmosphere as they are driven by the “fear of missing out”, which often pushes buyers to spend more to avoid being excluded from unique or culturally rich experiences.

A food festival held recently in Setapak, Kuala Lumpur gained widespread attention online as local vendors sparked a buzz with their pricey offerings.

Celebrity Mark Adam was a hot topic for selling three *satay* sticks at RM24.90 while vendor Aunty Ja made waves on TikTok with her latest creation, the “Tricolour Chocolate” priced at RM60 per cup.

Universiti Teknologi Mara Academy of SME and Entrepreneurship Development coordinator Dr Mohamad Idham Md Razak said pricing policy at food festivals is generally higher compared with street vendors or restaurants as the value proposition is special.

He said the social and psychological perks, such as networking, entertainment or following one's passions, could be worth the cost to many people.

“Food festivals sell themselves as a kind of luxury or pleasure consumption product, appealing to consumers who want to pay a



Sharifa Ezat expressed concern over the rise of sweet and junk food vendors at food festivals, where visitors continue to indulge in unhealthy fare despite the high prices. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ THESUN

premium for the experience and not the product.”

He said demand often rises due to the unique experiences and rare products customers value but the line between fair pricing and exploitation depends on how much prices exceed the vendor's costs, such as rent and wages.

“It is true that there are higher costs that merchants have to bear during these events, such as booth rental, event promotion and temporary staffing, which are added to the price.

“Such costs have a big influence on how food is priced during an event as it directly influences the cost structure of the vendor.”

He warned that food festivals, while celebrated as a source of tourism and culinary variety, may drive regional food inflation.

He said short-term high demand for specific ingredients and meals, particularly during festivals, often lead to price hikes as stores

capitalise on consumer willingness to pay more, potentially setting a precedent for future pricing.

“Food festivals contribute, if only for a short period of time in their own realm, to inflationary pressures in local food supply but are not a major source of long-term price inflation.”

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia public health medicine specialist Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh expressed concern over the rise of sweet and junk food vendors at food festivals, where attendees continue to indulge in unhealthy options despite the high prices.

She said pricey food at these festivals is often justified by vendors as part of covering overhead costs, while providing healthy food options still seems to be a low priority for vendors at this stage.

“Food festivals often lack specific guidelines on what types of food can be sold, leading to an abundance of junk and fast food

options. Nutritional guidelines, such as calorie limits, are not strictly enforced, leaving vendors with little oversight.”

She said many vendors at food festivals prioritise profit over considerations such as calorie content, health benefits or the suitability of their offerings.

According to World Factbook Central Intelligence Agency data from 2016 to 2024, Malaysia has seen a significant obesity prevalence, with 19.7% of adults classified as obese.

Sharifa Ezat stressed that food vendors at such events have a responsibility to ensure their offerings are not only appealing but also nutritious and ethically prepared.

“This is an area in which the Health Ministry, in collaboration with local governments, could introduce nutritional standards to ensure healthier choices at a reasonable price at these events.”

RM2.4b needed to address coastal erosion

KUALA TERENGGANU: State Infrastructure, Utilities and Rural Development Committee chairman Hanafiah Mat has revealed that Terengganu needs over RM2.4 billion to build breakwaters to address escalating coastal erosion.

He said the figure was an estimate, as the cost of building breakwaters ranges between RM5 million and RM10 million per kilometre and there are 34 affected locations.

“We need funds to protect about 244km of coastline at risk of erosion, particularly during the Northeast Monsoon season.

“The cost will vary based on factors such as whether the breakwater is made of concrete, tetrapods or gabions.”

He expressed hope that the federal government would approve more funding to address coastal erosion, particularly in Kuala Nerus.

He added that the state government has submitted a request for RM600,000 through the Public Works Department under the Malaysian Road Records Information System allocation.

The funds are intended for road repairs and short-term erosion prevention measures in Kampung Tanjung Batu Rakit, Kuala Nerus.

“These works are expected to begin within the next three to four weeks, subject to system approval and wave conditions.

“The proposed solution involves constructing a 400m rock revetment structure, 1.5m from the road shoulder.” — Bernama

Researchers develop smart fertigation system

MALACCA: A team of researchers from Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Malacca has developed a smart fertigation system using Internet of Things technology to boost agricultural production.

The system was developed by five researchers, led by Associate Prof Dr Imran Mohd Ibrahim from the Faculty of Technology and Electronics and Computer Engineering.

He said by using the system, crop production could increase from six tonnes in six weeks to 4.5 tonnes in two weeks, with total output potentially reaching 10 tonnes within six weeks, Bernama reported.

“The system ensures that 95% of the harvest are Grade A and B, which can be sold, with the remaining being Grade C and unsellable, compared with conventional methods in which 20% of the harvest is Grade C.

“This product has been tested and proven to work on a commercial agricultural scale, involving 1,000 cucumber plants, and has shown an increase in harvest.”

He added that using long-range wireless technology, data could be accessed remotely on a tablet or computer, enabling farmers to monitor water and fertiliser levels and plant health, and control the water pump from anywhere at any time.

RM100m spent to repair roads damaged by floods

KUALA LUMPUR: The cost of road repairs due to floods following the Northeast Monsoon has reached RM101.57 million, said Works Minister Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi.

He said it involved RM45.37 million of road repair costs in the states of Peninsular Malaysia, covering periodic repairs of pavements and non-pavements, bridges, traffic lights and street lights.

He said Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan required RM56.2 million for periodic repairs of pavements and non-pavements.

Nanta also said the cost of

repairing slope collapses in nine locations, five in Perak and two each in Kelantan and Terengganu, amounted to about RM41 million.

“There may be some that have not been reported. We are always receiving reports.

“We have mobilised the Public Works Department disaster operations room,” he told reporters after attending the monthly assembly of the Works Ministry on Tuesday.

He proposed that a merit system be implemented to measure the level of performance of concession

companies and contractors in implementing tasks, increasing their accountability, Bernama reported.

He said further research on the system would be discussed at the ministry's management level with the concessionaires and contractors so that a consensus could be reached to realise its implementation.

“This is not the first time it has been discussed. It would be good if we use the merit system because we have to benchmark performance.

“If we use the merit system, it might encourage them to be more diligent in carrying out their

responsibilities.” Alexander also said apart from the merit system, the management of each project would be monitored transparently from the planning phase to the maintenance phase.

“We could utilise the big data system to analyse project performance and identify potential improvements before problems arise.

“With more systematic management, we are confident that every project implemented would have maximum impact on the community and the country.”

Ex-engineer cheated of RM9.4m in online crypto scam

➤ Victim drawn to scheme advertised on social media promising returns of 50 times initial investment, says Johor police chief

JOHOR BAHRU: A former engineer suffered a loss of RM9.47 million after participating in a non-existent online cryptocurrency investment scheme that claimed to offer high returns.

Johor police chief Datuk M. Kumar said police received a report on Tuesday from the 63-year-old, who said he had seen an advertisement for the scheme on social media in July last year.

Kumar said the victim clicked on the provided link, which led him to a WhatsApp group, and he was then contacted by two individuals who explained how to invest, with a promised returns of 50 times the

initial investment.

"The victim, intrigued by the offer, proceeded to make 29 payment transactions between October and December last year to 11 different bank accounts, involving a total amount of RM9.47 million," he said in a statement.

Kumar added that the victim later checked on his investment and found that there was a profit of RM88 million, which he wanted to withdraw but was instructed to make another payment of RM800,000, Bernama reported.

"The victim refused to make the payment, and realised he had been scammed after he could not reach

the two individuals who had contacted him," Kumar said, adding that the case is being investigated under Section 420 of the Penal Code.

Meanwhile, a manager of a private company in Ampang Jaya lost over RM1.6 million after falling for a non-existent crypto investment scheme online.

Selangor police chief Datuk Hussein Omar Khan said in a statement the 61-year-old male was attracted to a cryptocurrency investment scheme advertised on Facebook.

He made a phone call, after which an individual sent him a link to join the scheme.

"The victim then made 15 online money transfers totalling RM1,630,000 to six bank accounts belonging to the individual, for the purpose of buying US dollars to be converted into cryptocurrency.

"But the complainant received

no returns as promised after depositing money in stages starting from Oct 18 to Dec 31 last year, before filing a police report in Ampang Jaya district yesterday," he said.

In a separate case, Hussein said a 62-year-old private company retiree suffered losses of RM997,105.50 after being deceived via a phone call that he allegedly faced possible arrest for criminal offences.

"Following that, an individual asked the victim to make a payment to avoid an arrest warrant being issued against him, before the retiree made two online money transfers to two bank accounts."

Hussein said the individual also asked the retiree to upload a picture of the front and back of his ATM card, after which money in his bank account was siphoned out before the victim lodged a police report in the Gombak district on Monday.

Bogus cop preying on Felda residents nabbed

LAHAD DATU: Police arrested a local man at a house in an oil palm plantation at Kampung Tanjung Labian in Tungku on Monday, for allegedly impersonating a police officer and robbing Felda Sahabat 6 residents last Friday.

Lahad Datu district police chief ACP Dzulbaharin Ismail said the 39-year-old suspect was arrested at about 3pm after authorities received a report from the public regarding his criminal activities.

"Preliminary investigations showed that the suspect was a former auxiliary police officer stationed in Tambisan, and is believed to have committed the robberies to fund his lifestyle.

"The suspect was also found in possession of a police uniform and an air rifle," said Dzulbaharin.

He added that the case is being investigated under Section 392 of the Penal Code for robbery without a weapon, Section 170 for impersonating a public servant, and Section 8(a) of the Arms Act 1960 for illegal possession of an air rifle. — Bernama

MACC, FBI collaborate to fight corruption

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will increase cooperation to address challenges in combating corruption at regional and international levels.

In a post on MACC's Facebook page, FBI legal attache Jagdeep Khangura lauded the collaboration discussed during a courtesy visit to MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki in Putrajaya on Tuesday.

The meeting, which lasted about an hour, focused on intelligence and investigation cooperation in high profile cases involving Malaysia and the United States.

Azam said MACC was ready to provide cooperation to the FBI in fighting corruption.

"The strength and closeness of the relationship between MACC and FBI is clearly demonstrated through the asset recovery achievements, especially from cases related to 1Malaysia Development Berhad." — Bernama

RM5.8 million smuggled cigarettes hidden in container seized

BUTTERWORTH: The Customs Department seized 4.5 million cigarettes with unpaid tax of RM5.84 million found hidden in a container laden with used clothing on Dec 26 last year.

Penang Customs director Rohaizad Ali said the cigarettes were seized during a follow-up inspection mounted by the state Customs enforcement team at Port Klang, Selangor.

"The container was declared to be carrying used clothing, but our inspection revealed 22,500 cartons containing 4.5 million sticks of cigarettes hidden behind 175 big boxes of used clothing.

"The cigarettes are worth an estimated RM1.37 million, with unpaid duties of RM5.84 million," he said yesterday.

He added that initial investigations found that the container, which was heading to India, originated from Thailand, and was only in transit at Port Klang.

Meanwhile, Rohaizad said the team also seized 52,790 cans of beer with unpaid tax of RM1.18 million in a container from India in another inspection at the



The contraband items that were seized in the Port Klang operations being displayed during a press conference at the Penang Customs Department yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

same port on Dec 12.

He said the container was declared as carrying furniture, and was registered under a fake

company address.

"The seizure involved 52,790 cans, equivalent to 26,395 litres of beer, estimated to be worth

RM264,000, with a total unpaid tax of RM1.18 million," he said.

No arrests have been made, he added. — Bernama

Huge crackdown to address drug issues in Sabah

KOTA KINABALU: A large scale integrated operation will soon be carried out to address longstanding drug issues in Sabah.

Bukit Aman Narcotics Crime Investigation Department (NCID) director Datuk Seri Khaw Kok Chin said the operation will involve Sabah NCID, the General Operations Force (GOF) and the Marine Police Force.

"Previously, operations were conducted independently by each agency. Sabah NCID, which has only 436 personnel, is unable to execute more effective operations.

"Therefore, we are seeking

assistance from Sabah GOF, which has 4,054 personnel and Sabah marine police, with 949 members. With their involvement, we are confident we can successfully carry out the operation," he said after attending a meeting with GOF and the Marine Police Force at the Sabah brigade headquarters in Kinarut on Tuesday.

Khaw said the meeting aimed to address border security issues, particularly the drug problem in Sabah, which needs to be resolved.

"Together, we have planned and identified hotspot areas, believed to

be the main routes for active syndicates in the state.

"I cannot disclose our strategies as it would compromise the operation."

He said Sabah is believed to serve as a transit point for drugs, before they are transported to neighbouring countries.

"Sabah's strategic location, being close to neighbouring countries, makes it a transit hub.

"Our investigations reveal that many islands in Tawau, Sandakan, and the eastern coastal areas are actively used as drug transit points.

"According to our findings, most drugs are sent to neighbouring countries due to higher demand and prices compared with Malaysia.

"In Malaysia, 1kg of methamphetamine is valued at around RM33,000 to RM35,000, but in neighbouring countries, it can fetch up to RM450,000, which makes it highly lucrative," he said.

Khaw urged the public to report to the nearest police station any information regarding drug syndicate activities, or their presence in their respective areas. — Bernama

Teenager setting up internet line electrocuted

MEMBAKUT (SABAH): A teenager is believed to have been electrocuted while installing an internet line in Kampung Sinoko here on Tuesday.

The Sabah Fire and Rescue Department operations centre said the victim, 19, was installing the line near an electricity pole.

The department received a report about the incident at 4.20pm, and five firefighters from the Kimanis Fire and Rescue station were dispatched to the scene.

"The victim was sent to hospital by his colleague before the firefighters arrived, and was confirmed dead upon arrival at the hospital." — Bernama



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French navy destroyer on port call in Penang

➤ Presence of air defence warship part of mission to achieve security, peace and stability in Indo-Pacific region

BY T.C. KHOR
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GEORGE TOWN: The French Navy air defence destroyer *FS Forbin* has been on a port call in Penang since Jan 12.

The 153m long and 20m wide warship, with a crew of 220, is on an escort mission for the French Carrier Strike Group (CSG).

France ambassador to Malaysia Axel Cruau said French presence in the Pacific and Indian oceans demonstrates its "constant commitment to peace and security worldwide".

"In a world marked by increased tension and crises, this mission is proof of France's will and capacity to act to protect international law, in particular, the law of the sea, to protect free and open access to common spaces, to defend sovereignties, and reinforce its partnerships," he said during a press conference aboard the vessel on Tuesday.

Cruau added that France is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and with it, is a power that is committed to respect for an international order based on law.

"(It is) a power attached to respect for borders and for sovereignty, and a power which refuses imperialism, whatever its forms and whatever the countries that use imperialism," he stressed.

He also highlighted that there were about two million French citizens living in the Indian and Pacific oceans region, particularly in La Reunion, Polynesia and New Caledonia.

"We are a power that does not intend to enter in a confrontational strategy. So, in this



Leouffre on the deck of *FS Forbin*, which is on an escort mission for the French Carrier Strike Group, that includes the *Charles De Gaulle* aircraft carrier. — T.C. KHOR/THE SUN

unstable world, Asia, in our view, must remain a zone of stability, and France is very attached to the centrality of Asean.

"So, this is why we are here in the Indo-Pacific," he said, adding that these missions aim to achieve security, peace and stability, all of which are conditions for prosperity.

He also emphasised the importance of Malaysia's role as chair of Asean, stating that France "hopes for a lot of progress and a lot of new initiatives".

Commanding captain of the *FS Forbin* Aurelie Leouffre said the exercise, covering a broad spectrum of maritime security operations, will take place simultaneously in three areas in the Straits of Malacca and the Sunda Strait and Lombok in Indonesia.

As part of the Mission Clemenceau 25, the CSG comprising the *Charles De Gaulle* aircraft carrier, its carrier air wing and escort vessels will be operating near Malaysia and Indonesia this month.

"In the Straits of Malacca, the French Navy will engage an air defence destroyer, and the Royal Malaysian Navy will participate with one corvette and one offshore patrol vessel from

Jan 16 to 24," she said.

"The exercise will enable us to increase our interoperability and consolidate our cooperation mechanisms and processes."

The French embassy also highlighted the ongoing military cooperation between France and Malaysia, with defence industry cooperation reaching "high-end levels" and Malaysia acquiring military equipment from French companies.

"Malaysia and France are long-standing defence partners, and France highly values its defence cooperation with Malaysia, a collaboration nourished by high-level meetings."

The CSG is currently deployed in the Indian Ocean, where joint training operation "La Perouse" is being carried out with allies in the region. The CSG will later sail to the Pacific Ocean for the Pacific Steller exercise.

Meanwhile, at the waterfront Esplanade, members of the *FS Forbin* crew attended a ceremony at the memorial monument of the French destroyer *Mousquet* to pay tribute to the French sailors who fought off the coast of Penang on Oct 28, 1914.

Gathering of Southeast Asia tourism stakeholders

JOHOR BAHRU: The Asean Tourism Forum (ATF) 2025 began yesterday, bringing together tourism stakeholders from across Southeast Asia for a six-day series of events aimed at promoting collaboration and sustainable growth in the regional tourism sector.

This year's forum is focused on the theme "Unity in Motion: Shaping Asean's Tourism Tomorrow," reflecting its goal of fostering regional cooperation across cultural and geographical boundaries.

The event will be attended by Tourism, Arts, and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing and tourism ministers from other Asean nations, government officials, corporate leaders and media representatives from all 10 Asean member states.

A wide array of activities is expected take place throughout the six-day event, including high-level meetings such as the 15th Asean-Russia Tourism Consultation Meeting, 33rd Asean-India Tourism Working Group Meeting and the 61st Asean National Tourism Organisations Meeting.

As part of the forum, the 28th Asean Tourism Ministers meeting, Asean Tourism Awards Ceremony and Asean Tourism Minister's Press Conference will also be held, in addition to the popular Travel Exchange trade fair.

The fair serves as a trade focused platform at which tourism products and services from across Asean are showcased to attract sellers and buyers from Asean countries and international markets while providing an opportunity for businesses to forge partnerships, promote regional tourism and drive growth in the sector.

A significant development at the event will be the signing of a MoU between Malaysia and South Korea to further strengthen tourism ties.

ATF 2025 is particularly significant as Malaysia is Asean Chair this year, emphasising its commitment to regional sustainable tourism.

Last year, during ATF 2024 held in Vientiane, Laos, Malaysia focused on advancing sustainable tourism practices, with initiatives aimed at promoting ecotourism, preserving natural resources and engaging local communities.

This is the second time Malaysia is hosting the event, the first being in Kuching, Sarawak in 2014. — Bernama

EDUCATION

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Investigators question Yoon

➤ First sitting South Korean president to be arrested

SEOUL: Impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was arrested and questioned by authorities in relation to a criminal insurrection investigation yesterday, saying he was only cooperating with what he called an illegal probe to avoid violence.

His arrest, the first ever for an incumbent South Korean president, is the latest head-spinning development for one of Asia's most vibrant democracies even though the country has a history of prosecuting and imprisoning former leaders.

Since lawmakers voted to stand him down after his short-lived declaration of martial law on Dec 3, Yoon has been holed up at his hillside residence, guarded by a small army of personal security that blocked a previous arrest attempt.

He agreed to come in for questioning after more than 3,000 police officers determined to arrest him marched on his residence early yesterday.

"I decided to respond to the CIO's investigation – despite it being an illegal investigation – to prevent unsavoury bloodshed," Yoon said in a statement, referring to the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) that is heading the criminal probe.

A prosecutor accompanied Yoon in his car from his home in the upscale area known as Seoul's Beverly Hills to the austere CIO offices, where he slipped in through a back entrance, avoiding media.

Authorities now have 48 hours to question Yoon after which they must seek a warrant to detain him for up to 20 days or release him.

However, Yoon is refusing to talk and has not agreed to have interviews with investigators recorded on video, a CIO official said. The CIO said it had no information on why Yoon was refusing to talk.

Yoon's lawyers have said the arrest warrant is illegal because it was issued by a court in the wrong jurisdiction and the team set up to investigate him had no legal mandate to do so. A warrant to search Yoon at his residence, a copy of which was seen by Reuters, referred to Yoon as "ringleader of insurrection".

Presidential guards were stationed on the



Police officers and investigators gathering at the entrance to Yoon's official residence. – REUTERS/SPIC

CIO floor where Yoon is being questioned, said a CIO official, but he will likely be held at Seoul Detention Centre, where other high-profile figures including former president Park Geun-hye and Samsung Electronics Chairman Jay Y. Lee have also spent time.

On the menu tonight: a dinner of beansprout soup, barbecue beef and *kimchi*, costing around US\$1 (RM4.50).

Separate to the criminal investigation, the Constitutional Court is deliberating whether to uphold his impeachment by parliament and permanently remove him from office or restore his presidential powers.

The United States remains committed to working with the government in Seoul and appreciates all its efforts and citizens "to act in accordance with the Constitution", a spokesperson for the White House National

Security Council said in statement.

The latest arrest attempt that began before dawn gripped the nation with hundreds of thousands glued to live feeds showing bus loads of police arriving near the presidential residence, pushing past Yoon supporters and then walking towards the gates of the compound carrying ladders and wire cutters.

As news broadcasters reported that Yoon's detention was imminent, some minor scuffles broke out between pro-Yoon protesters and police near the residence.

Throng of protesters, that also gathered outside the CIO offices, waved South Korean and American flags and held posters bearing "Stop the Steal" slogans referring to Yoon's unsubstantiated claims of election fraud – one of the reasons he gave to justify his short-lived martial law declaration. – Reuters

Vietnam shuts major TV broadcaster

HANOI: One of Vietnam's largest state TV broadcasters went off air yesterday as part of sweeping bureaucratic reforms that will see 20% of the public workforce reduced across the country.

The government wants to streamline the political system to reduce red tape and slash spending.

The reforms will see eight ministries and government agencies cut and a host of media organisations radically restructured in reforms described as "a revolution" by senior officials.

VTC – Vietnam's second-most popular TV station – went off air, with its 13 channels broadcasting for the final time on Tuesday.

It is unclear what will happen to VTC's 800 employees.

In a farewell message, VTC hosts said that the station had "come to the end of its 20-year mission to serve the community and society".

Together with VTC, another four broadcasters – VOVT, VNATV, Quoc Hoi TV and Nhan Dan TV – have been forced to close.

VTV, the country's largest and most viewed broadcaster, has been assigned to "take on the function and tasks" of these stations, the government said.

All media in Vietnam is controlled to varying degrees by the state, with no independent domestic media agencies allowed.

The reforms, which are expected to get the final nod of approval by parliament in February, will see the number of ministries reduced from 30 to 22. The civil service, police, the military and state-owned organisations all face cuts.

Internal Affairs Minister Pham Thi Thanh Tra said the reforms were "a revolution not only to streamline the apparatus but also to change mindsets, vision and awareness towards a better future", according to state media.

The cuts come five months after To Lam became Vietnam's most powerful leader, following the death of his predecessor. – AFP

S'pore to create 10 more 'friendly streets'

SINGAPORE: Authorities here announced plans to upgrade 10 streets across the island by next year to enhance walking and cycling commutes, particularly for seniors and young children.

Work on these "Friendly Streets" will begin in the first half of this year, with completion targeted for next year, Senior Minister of State for Transport Amy Khor said on Tuesday at a launch held in Holland Village, where one of the streets is located.

By 2030, every town in Singapore will feature at least one "Friendly Street", she said.

The streets are in residential areas with high pedestrian traffic and are close to essential amenities such as markets, hawkers centres, community clubs, schools and MRT stations.

These areas often have a higher concentration of seniors or young families, according to a statement from the Land Transport Authority (LTA).

Proposed enhancements include lower speed limits, barrier-free pedestrian crossings with priority for walkers, road markings and treatment to calm traffic and promote courteous driving, as well as wider and more accessible footpaths.

The specific locations and features of these streets were determined in collaboration with local communities after consultations with stakeholders and residents.

Launched as a pilot in 2023, the Friendly Streets initiative began with five streets.

Four have already been completed and another is slated for completion by March. – Bernama

Marcos hopeful strong alliance with US will continue

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos is hopeful Manila and Washington will maintain their "strong and dynamic" relationship under the incoming US administration, a palace statement said yesterday, less than a week before Donald Trump assumes office.

The United States has a decades-old security alliance with the Philippines that includes a mutual defence treaty and a 2014 pact which allows the US military to store equipment on nine Philippine bases.

With Trump assuming office on Jan 20, many in the Philippines are wary about the future of Manila and Washington's relationship.

But Marcos "expressed optimism in maintaining the strong and dynamic relationship" between the two countries –

particularly on economics, defence and security – during a phone call with Vice-President Kamala Harris.

"The progress that we have made is terribly encouraging and we just hope to build on that," said a statement from Manila's Presidential Communications Office, quoting Marcos during the call.

He also hopes the two countries "continue to stand for our shared values and the rule of international law".

The call with Harris came the same week Marcos held a call with President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba where they reaffirmed their commitment to "advance a free and open Indo-Pacific".

The Philippines and Japan – both longtime

US allies – have stepped up security cooperation with Washington to blunt China's efforts to control most of the disputed South China Sea.

In her call with Marcos, Harris "underscored the strength of the US-Philippines alliance and people-to-people ties and noted it was critical for preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific," a White House statement said.

"The vice-president affirmed the importance of continued defence of international rules and norms in the South China Sea in the face of provocations and noted the United States must stand with the Philippines ... and the enduring nature of the US defence commitments," it said.

Marcos and Harris "also discussed trilateral cooperation with Japan as a key pillar of regional security", the White House said. – AFP

Indian police arrest 49 men over sexual abuse of teen

BENGALURU: More than four dozen men have been arrested in India for the repeated sexual abuse of a teenager.

The unnamed woman, now 18, said around 60 men sexually abused her in her home state of Kerala from when she was just 13.

"Forty-nine people have been taken into custody," said Pathanamthitta district police official Nandakumar S.

The accused men were known to the woman and included neighbours and family friends.

Rajeev N, a lawyer who heads a local child welfare committee, said the woman's parents were "unaware of their daughter's nightmare".

"The child is being kept away from the media and only police are visiting her to record her statements," he said.

The *Indian Express* newspaper reported this

week that one of the accused men blackmailed the woman with a video.

After the threat, many of his friends assaulted her.

A police investigation found that she had been gang-raped on at least five occasions.

An average of nearly 90 rapes a day were reported in 2022 in the country of 1.4 billion people. – AFP



Firefighters hold the line despite extreme conditions

➤ At least 25 dead, over 12,000 structures damaged or destroyed

LOS ANGELES: Firefighters on Tuesday held the line against two massive wildfires that have ravaged parts of Los Angeles for the past week, even as desert winds and a parched landscape presented extremely hazardous conditions.

Some 8,500 firefighters from at least seven states and two foreign countries prevented the blazes from growing for the second day running. Still, the fires have consumed an area the size of Washington, DC.

A fleet of aircraft dropped water and retardant into the rugged hills while ground crews with hand tools and hoses have worked around the clock since the fires broke out on Jan 7, with the aircraft occasionally grounded by high winds.

The Palisades Fire on the west edge of town held steady at 96 sq km burned, and containment nudged up to 18%.

The Eaton Fire in the foothills east of the city

stood at 57 sq km with containment at 35%.

Southern California has lacked any appreciable rain since April, turning brush into tinder as Santa Ana winds from the deserts whipped over hilltops and rushed through canyons, sending embers flying up to 3km ahead of the fires.

Winds were weaker than expected during the day on Tuesday but forecast to peak, with gusts in the mountains possibly reaching 112kph, the National Weather Service said, as it kept a red flag warning in place.

The death toll from the fires rose by one on Tuesday to 25, according to the Los Angeles medical examiner's office. The estimate of structures damaged or destroyed held steady at over 12,000, still portending a herculean rebuilding effort ahead.

In hard-hit Pacific Palisades, Karina Maher and her husband Michael Kovac experienced some "survivor guilt" that their home made it through the fire while many of their neighbours' properties were lost.

"Designing the house so close to nature and knowing the history of Southern California, we were acutely aware that, at some point in the house's life, there would be a serious fire," said Kovac, an architect who designed the building.

"So we designed the house to be both fire resilient and sustainable. And happily, those two systems are often one and the same."

A few thousand more people were allowed back home but 88,000 remained under evacuation orders with another 84,000 under evacuation warning.

"It's one thing to see it on television. It's another thing to see it from the air. The massive, massive destruction is unimaginable until you actually see it," Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass told a press conference.

A team of 50 firefighters and sheriff's deputies conducted house-by-house searches, looking for any lingering fires and hazards such as lithium-ion batteries connected to solar panels.

The Palisades Fire also approached the priceless art collection at the J. Paul Getty Museum, which houses paintings by Van Gogh, Rembrandt, Monet and Degas.

But the collection remained safely inside the Getty Centre's fortress of travertine stone, fire-protected steel and reinforced concrete.

Private forecaster AccuWeather estimates total damage and economic loss between US\$250 billion and US\$275 billion (RM1.1 trillion and RM1.2 trillion). - Reuters



A fire crew driving through a mobile home park destroyed by the Palisades Fire. - AFP/IC

Japan, US firms prepare moon landers for launch

ORLANDO: Two moon landers, one from Japan's space and another from US space firm Firefly, were fastened atop a SpaceX rocket in Florida on Tuesday ahead of an unusual double moonshot launch, underscoring the rush to explore the lunar surface.

Japanese space exploration company ispace will launch its *Hakuto-R* Mission 2, making its second attempt to land on the moon after an initial mission in April 2023 failed in its final moments because of an altitude miscalculation.

While Texas-based Firefly Aerospace will launch its first moon lander, Blue Ghost, which would make it the third company to launch a moon lander under NASA's public-private Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) programme.

Intuitive Machines' moon landing last year, albeit lopsided and partially unsuccessful,

marked the first private company and the first CLPS mission to land on the moon. An earlier attempt by CLPS member Astrobotic's lander failed shortly after launch.

Countries and private companies have been focused on the moon in recent years for its potential to host astronaut bases and hold resources that could be mined for in-space applications, making Earth's natural satellite a stage for national prestige and geopolitical competition akin to the Cold War-era space race.

ispace's *Hakuto* lander, named Resilience, is carrying US\$16 million (RM72 million) worth of customer missions and six payloads in total, including an in-house "micro rover" that will deploy from the lander and collect lunar samples, said ispace executive business director Junpei Nozaki in an interview.

Hakuto's touchdown on the Moon's surface is

expected four to five months after launch, or this summer. It will take an energy-efficient path relying heavily on the Earth and Moon's gravity in a winding series of flybys to steer its trajectory.

Firefly's Blue Ghost will aim to reach the Moon 45 days after launch, around March 2. That lander is carrying 10 payloads from a variety of NASA-funded customers and one from Blue Origin-owned Honeybee Robotics.

Both landers' missions will last a full lunar day, or roughly two weeks. They will not survive the frigid lunar nighttime where temperatures can plunge to roughly minus 128°C.

Nasa with its Artemis programme aims to return humans to the Moon by 2027 - but likely later - for the first time since 1972, while China plans to put its own crews on the lunar surface by 2030 following a series of robotic missions. - Reuters

Pope recounts 'mischievous' youth in biography

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis reveals his "mischievous" youth in an autobiography published on Tuesday, in a book that also touches on his childhood, immigration and ordering pizza.

In excerpts of *Hope: The Autobiography* provided by publishers, the pontiff recounts episodes from growing up in a multicultural neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, including things he would come to regret.

"I remember my sins and I am ashamed ... I am a sinner like everyone else," the 88-year-old leader of the world's Roman Catholics writes, describing himself as a "mischievous child".

The pope, who has repeatedly urged sympathy and care for migrants hoping to reach Europe, also tells of his own Italian grandparents' emigration to Argentina in 1929.

Holding only third-class boat tickets for the voyage, his grandmother had to hide her possessions in the lining of her jacket.

"There's nothing new about it. It's a story of yesterday as much as one of today," Francis writes.

He also recounts his surprise at being chosen in 2013 to lead the Catholic church, saying: "I had never imagined that the conclave could affect me directly, and in no way could I have thought about a name as pope."

Francis also says he has not watched TV since 1990, "to respect a vow I made to the Virgin del Carmen on the night of July 15 of that year".

"That evening I was with my community in Buenos Aires, we were watching the TV, and a sordid scene appeared on the screen, which deeply offended me: I got up and left."

That has meant not being able to watch matches of his favourite San Lorenzo football team - though a Swiss Guard brings him match results - among the sacrifices of being pope.

"Going out for a pizza is one of the small things that I most miss," he writes.

"As a cardinal, I used to love walking the streets and taking the subway ... I have always liked walking." - AFP

BRIEFS

TOKYO TO PROVIDE US\$2M WILDFIRE RELIEF AID

TOKYO: Japan announced yesterday a contribution of US\$2 million (RM9 million) in aid to California to support recovery efforts following wildfires that claimed dozens of lives and caused catastrophic damage. The assistance will be channelled through the American Red Cross. A Foreign Ministry official said the funds will be used to establish evacuation centres, provide food and offer psychological support to victims. "Japan will actively provide assistance for the relief of the victims and the earliest possible recovery of the affected areas." - Bernama

CRACKDOWN ON FLAG OF CONVENIENCE SHIPS

TAIPEI: Taiwan will step up the surveillance and management of ships carrying flags of convenience, including boarding them. Its National Security Bureau said such ships which have previously been found to misreport information will be put on a list for priority inspection at ports. If these ships enter within 44km of Taiwan's coast and are close to where undersea cables are, the coast guard will be dispatched to board them and investigate. - Reuters

DOHA: Negotiators were trying to hammer out the final details of a complex, phased ceasefire in Gaza yesterday after marathon talks in Qatar, and US and Egyptian leaders promised to stay in close contact about a deal over the coming hours.

More than eight hours of talks in Doha had fuelled optimism. Officials from mediators Qatar, Egypt and the US as well as Israel and Hamas said on Tuesday that an agreement for a truce in the besieged Palestinian enclave and the release of hostages was closer than ever.

But a senior Hamas official said late on Tuesday that the group had not yet delivered its response because it was still waiting for Israel to submit maps showing how its forces would withdraw from Gaza.

During months of on-off talks to achieve a truce in the devastating 15-month-old war both sides have previously said they were close to a ceasefire only to hit last-minute obstacles. The broad outlines of the deal have been in place since mid-2024.

If successful, the planned phased ceasefire could halt fighting that has decimated Gaza, killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, made most of the enclave's population homeless and is still killing dozens each day.

That in turn could ease tensions across the wider Middle East, where the war has fuelled conflict in the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iraq, and raised fears of all-out war between Israel and Iran.

Israel would recover around 100 remaining hostages and bodies from among those captured in the Oct 7, 2023 attacks by Hamas that precipitated the war. In return it would free Palestinian detainees.

The latest draft deal is complicated and sensitive. Under its terms the first steps would feature a six-week initial ceasefire.

The plan also includes a gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from central Gaza and the return of displaced Palestinians to north Gaza.

The deal would also require Hamas to release 33 Israeli hostages along with other steps.

Ceasefire mediators, warring sides push on

Israel continues military strikes despite talks

The draft stipulates negotiations over a second phase of the agreement to begin by the 16th day of phase one. Phase two includes the release of all remaining hostages, a permanent ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of Israeli soldiers.

Even if the warring sides agree to the deal on the table, that agreement still needs further negotiation before

there is a final ceasefire and the release of all the hostages

If it all goes smoothly, the Palestinians, Arab states and Israel still need to agree on a vision for post-war Gaza, a massive task involving security guarantees for Israel and billions of dollars in investment for rebuilding.

Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed Al-Ansari said on Tuesday that both sides were presented with a text and talks on the last details were under way.

Hamas said the talks had reached the final steps and it hoped this round of negotiations would lead to a deal.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said on Tuesday he believed a majority of Israel's coalition government would support a Gaza deal if one is finally agreed, despite vocal opposition from headline nationalist parties in the coalition.

Despite the efforts to reach a ceasefire, the Israeli military, the

Shin Bet internal intelligence agency and the air force attacked about 50 targets throughout Gaza over the last 24 hours, Shin Bet and the military said in a statement.

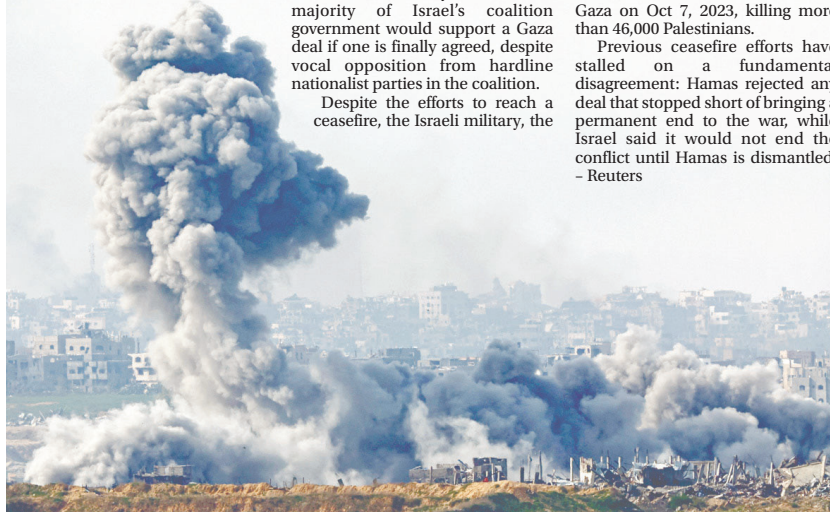
The United Nations said it was preparing to expand humanitarian assistance to Gaza under a potential ceasefire, but there was still uncertainty around border access and security.

Families of hostages in Israel were caught between hope and despair.

"We can't miss this moment. This is the last moment; we can save them," said Hadas Calderon, whose husband Ofer and children Sahar and Erez were abducted.

Israel launched its assault in Gaza on Oct 7, 2023, killing more than 46,000 Palestinians.

Previous ceasefire efforts have stalled on a fundamental disagreement: Hamas rejected any deal that stopped short of bringing a permanent end to the war, while Israel said it would not end the conflict until Hamas is dismantled. - Reuters



Smoke plumes rise from explosions above destroyed buildings in the northern Gaza Strip. - AFP/IC

Iran warns Trump against risking 'war'

WASHINGTON: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran was not seeking "nuclear weaponry" and warned US President-elect Donald Trump against risking "war" with the Islamic republic, according to a US televised interview broadcast on Tuesday.

"I do hope that Trump will conduce to peace in the region and the world not, conversely, contribute to bloodshed or war," Pezeshkian said in an interview with NBC News.

Washington has not maintained formal diplomatic relations with Tehran for nearly 45 years, and Trump threatened during his presidential campaign that Israel could strike Iranian nuclear facilities.

"We will react to any action. We do not fear war, but we do not seek it," Pezeshkian said about the prospect of Israeli military strikes.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said European powers were serious about resuming nuclear programme negotiations.

In 2015, Iran and world powers - including France, Britain and Germany - reached an agreement to ease sanctions in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme.

But the United States, during Trump's first term in office, unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 and reimposed biting economic sanctions.

Tehran adhered to the deal until Washington's withdrawal.

"We do not seek to create nuclear weaponry or armament," Pezeshkian said.

When asked about the possibility of talks with Trump, the Iranian leader was sceptical.

"The problem we have is not in dialogue. It's in the commitments that arise from talks that we'll have to commit to," Pezeshkian said, adding: "It was the other party that did not live up to its promises and obligations." - AFP

Russia targets Ukraine energy sites in 'massive' barrage

KYIV: Russia launched dozens of missiles and drones at the Ukrainian energy sector, Kyiv said yesterday, ramping up a months-long bombing campaign at a precarious moment of the war for Ukraine.

The barrage came just one day after Kyiv said it had carried out its largest ever aerial attack on Russian army factories and energy hubs hundreds of kilometres from the front line.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Moscow had fired more than 40 missiles and over 70 attack

drones against sites including gas infrastructure.

Ukrainian air defence systems shot down at least 30 of the Russian missiles, which included ballistic missiles, Zelensky said.

Ukrainian authorities in the west of the country said critical infrastructure facilities had been targeted in a "massive" missile attack after air alerts sounded nationwide.

"Critical infrastructure facilities were targeted in Prykarpattia," said the regional governor of the western Ivano-Frankivsk region.

Authorities in the western Lviv region, which borders EU and Nato member Poland, said two critical infrastructure facilities had been hit in the Drogobych and Stryi districts.

"Fortunately, there were no casualties, but there was damage," governor Maksym Kozvitsky said.

The Ukrainian national grid operator announced it was introducing emergency blackouts in seven regions including the eastern Donetsk region.

"Due to the massive attack, the transmission system operator is

applying preventive restrictions," said Energy Minister German Galushchenko.

The governor of the eastern Donetsk region said critical infrastructure had also been hit in his region over the last 24 hours.

The mayor of the southern city of Kherson said that "part of our community is without electricity" as a result of the barrage.

Ukrainian authorities had earlier issued air raid alerts for the entire country, warning of cruise missiles.

The warning said missiles were

headed towards the central city of Kryvyi Rig, the northern Chernigiv region, central Poltava region and southern Mykolaiv region.

A group of cruise missiles was also headed to Kyiv, the air force said.

Moscow has pursued a months-long bombing campaign against Ukrainian energy infrastructure claiming the attacks are targeted against facilities that aid Kyiv's military.

The Russian military had accused Kyiv of using US- and British-supplied missiles. - AFP

Australia mulls options over death of POW

SYDNEY: Australia said yesterday "all options are open" in its response to the reported killing of one of its citizens after his capture by Russian forces in Ukraine.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong said the government was working "very hard" to confirm a report that Oscar Jenkins had been killed.

Australia's Channel Seven said his body had been found but had not yet been officially identified.

Video emerged online in December of Jenkins, who reportedly fought with Ukrainian forces, being questioned and slapped in the face by a man speaking Russian.

Wong told broadcaster ABC that Russia's ambassador to Australia had been called in this week "at my direction".

Asked how Australia would react if the killing was confirmed, and whether the ambassador might be

expelled, she said: "I want to be clear, all options are on the table."

Wong said Russia had an obligation to treat prisoners of war (POW) in line with international law, including by giving them humane treatment and the right to a fair trial.

Australian relations with Moscow have been "very difficult" for many years, Wong said.

She cited the Russian intervention in Ukraine in February 2022, and the

July 2014 downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 by a Russian-made missile.

The MH17 crash over eastern Ukraine killed 298 people aboard, including 38 Australians.

"Australia has maintained diplomatic relations with Russia through that period under different governments," Wong said.

"However, we will consider all options once we have ascertained the

facts and once we can verify what has actually occurred here with Jenkins."

The foreign minister said her thoughts were with Jenkins' family.

"They have lived with the fear and uncertainty of a loved one in the middle of a foreign war for many months," Wong said.

"I know these reports will be devastating to them, and they are in my thoughts, and I'm sure the thoughts of many Australians." - AFP



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Making a difference with green technology

GEOPOLITICAL rivalry and conflict related to the rise of China as an economic, manufacturing and trade superpower is holding back the dissemination of green technology advances.

Two news reports covering events in different parts of the world highlight the need for the application of green technology to prevent further environmental degradation and mitigate the worsening crises caused by climate change and unsustainable development practices.

The two events are the fires in Los Angeles (LA), with its toll on lives and property, and the less obvious but just as deadly agency of air pollution assailing the population of Delhi and its surrounding areas.

In LA, the area burned by wildfires now exceeds the size of San Francisco, with early estimates of the ongoing damage reaching US\$150 billion (RM675 billion). This makes it the most costly disaster in California's history, second only to *Hurricane Katrina*, which caused an estimated US\$200 billion in damages in the US.

While *Hurricane Katrina* was primarily an unavoidable natural disaster, the current fires in LA are considered more preventable in terms of their causes, spread and severity. Although it has been a problem for decades, the full impact of Delhi's air pollution has yet to be comprehensively studied.

Some estimates suggest that India's air pollution costs exceed US\$100 billion annually due to lost productivity, work absences and premature deaths, with the greatest impact concentrated in the northern region.

A 2023 report from the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute found that Delhi residents may lose an average of 11.9 years of life to air pollution. A similar frightening scenario has been found in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal.

Ignoring elephant in the room

The blame game in LA over the historic fires has predictably taken on partisan

political tones, with a focus on leadership and policy weaknesses and failures.

Although mismanagement and human factors played a role in what unfolded in the fires and similar disasters, scientific opinion is increasingly inclined towards climate change and extreme weather events as major causative factors.

Despite the differing views on the role of climate change in areas experiencing unprecedented wildfires, droughts, floods and air quality issues, there can be no disagreement that the faster adoption of green technology can make a positive difference.

The grim reality for the world is that societies and countries everywhere have to cope with an unprecedented proliferation of crises of their own making, which are becoming increasingly costly and devastating in their impact and financial toll.

At the same time, the optimistic reality is that we have the tools - through appropriate green technologies - to better manage climate change and other man-made environmental crises.

Spread of green technology lagging

The limited use of green technology to build a more sustainable world and mitigate the impact of climate change is due to a myriad of reasons, including a lack of knowledge and awareness, policies and regulations lagging behind technological advancements, inadequate supportive infrastructure, concerns over high initial investment costs and political pushback arising from geopolitical rivalry.

The final factor, geopolitical rivalry and conflict, is especially important and relates to the rise of China as an economic, manufacturing and trade superpower. This has led to fear and resistance from the US and the West to accept the change affecting the world order, resulting in the campaign to bring China down.

In the climate change and sustainable development sectors, this factor is evident from the response of the West to the adoption of innovations in green technology, of which China is a



"Despite the differing views on the role of climate change in areas experiencing unprecedented wildfires, droughts, floods and air quality issues, there can be no disagreement that the faster adoption of green technology can make a positive difference."



The optimistic reality is that we have the tools to better manage climate change and other man-made environmental crises. - AFPPIC

world leader.

This is evident in the high tariff and other exclusionary policies and measures introduced by the US, European Union and some of its Western allies to block Chinese electric vehicles (EV) despite the undeniable environmental advantages of EV over internal combustion engines in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A similar exclusionary process is taking place with other Chinese green technology developments that are exported to the world. This includes solar photovoltaic, wind turbines, lithium-ion batteries and a host of other emerging technologies such as low-emission hydrogen, carbon capture solutions, grid-scale energy storage and smart grid technologies that can pave the way to a greener world.

The West had initially welcomed China's green technology revolution. In 2019, the International Renewable Energy Agency, an intergovernmental organisation that promotes the adoption and sustainable use of renewable energy, noted approvingly that "no country has put itself in a better position to become the world's renewable energy superpower than China. In aggregate, it is now the world's largest producer, exporter and installer of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and electric vehicles, placing it at the forefront of the global energy transition".

Today, instead of welcoming and leveraging China's green technology products to help the world attain the climate change targets set up by the 29 UN climate change conferences (the most recent, held in Baku in 2024, calls for mobilising financing for climate change mitigation), we are seeing a 180° and more turn in the US and other Western government response to China's green technology and renewable energy advances and leadership.

This turnaround which has been justified as helping shield the domestic producers of green technology in the West will not only obstruct efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions and decarbonise economies. It could also provide the setting for similar environmental crises and disasters that we are seeing in LA, Delhi and other parts of the world.

Looking ahead, one hopeful development is the emergence of BRICS as a key player in the world order and China's role in it. This is not only a game changer in global politics and economics. It has the potential to help the world to a greener and environmentally more sustainable future.

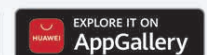
Lim Teck Ghee's Another Take is aimed at demystifying social orthodoxy. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

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Wu Wei: Going with the flow

THE modern world is a symphony of “doing”. We are bombarded with messages urging us to strive, achieve and conquer.

Our worth is often measured by the length of our to-do lists and the efficiency with which we can tick off tasks. But what if this relentless pursuit of “doing” is hindering our effectiveness, well-being and our ability to truly connect with the flow of life?

Enter *Wu Wei*, an ancient Chinese philosophy that whispers a different tune. Translated as “non-doing” or “effortless action”, *Wu Wei* invites us to step off the treadmill of constant striving and embrace a more harmonious way of being.

It is about aligning ourselves with the natural rhythm of the universe, recognising that sometimes, the most effective action is to surrender to the flow, to let go of control and to allow things to unfold organically.

This concept of detachment is central to *Wu Wei*. It is not about apathy or indifference but rather about releasing our grip on outcomes, expectations and the need to control every aspect of our lives.

It is about recognising that true power lies not in forcing our will upon the world but in aligning ourselves with the natural currents of life.

This brings us to an interesting paradox: our desire to be the “saviour”, to fix the world’s problems and rescue those in need, can often stem from a subtle form of egotism.

We see the suffering, injustice and



“It is about aligning ourselves with the natural rhythm of the universe, recognising that sometimes, the most effective action is to surrender to the flow, to let go of control and to allow things to unfold organically.”

environmental degradation, and our instinct is to jump in, to take charge, to become the hero of the narrative.

We appoint ourselves as the guardians of Mother Earth, champions of noble causes, driven by a sense of urgency and responsibility to “save” the day. But what if this impulse to “save” is rooted in a need to feel important, assert our control and prove our own worth?

What if, in our eagerness to fix the world, we are reinforcing our sense of separation from it? And just perhaps, Mother Earth does not need saving to thrive. Perhaps, it is we who need her to ensure humanity’s survival.

Wu Wei offers a different perspective. It invites us to consider that true change often arises not from forceful intervention but from a deep understanding of interconnectedness and a willingness to surrender to the wisdom of the *Tao*. It is about recognising that we are not separate from the world but rather an integral part of its intricate web of life.

This does not mean we should remain passive in the face of suffering or injustice. But it does suggest that our actions may be more effective, more aligned with the

natural flow of things, when they arise from a place of detachment, from a deep understanding that we are not in control of the universe but rather participants in its unfolding dance.

Think of a gardener tending to the plants. He does not force the seeds to sprout or the flowers to bloom. Instead, he provides the necessary conditions – fertile soil, water and sunlight – and trust in the inherent wisdom of nature to do the rest.

Similarly, when we approach life’s challenges with a sense of detachment, we create space for solutions to emerge organically, for unexpected opportunities to arise and for the collective wisdom of the universe to guide our actions.

This detachment allows us to navigate life’s challenges with greater grace and equanimity.

When we release our attachment to specific outcomes, we become more adaptable, resilient and open to new possibilities.

We free ourselves from the burden of expectations and the fear of failure, creating space for creativity, spontaneity and a deeper connection to the present moment.

But how do we actually cultivate

this sense of detachment, this effortless flow that characterises *Wu Wei*? It is not about becoming aloof or indifferent but rather about actively engaging with life while simultaneously releasing our grip on how things “should” be.

Here are a few practices to help you cultivate the art of detachment:

☞ **Mindful acceptance:** Start by noticing your attachments. What are you clinging to? What outcomes are you desperately trying to control? Once you have identified these attachments, practise acknowledging them without judgement. Simply observe them, allowing them to be present without getting swept away by their demands.

☞ **The “surrender experiment”:** Inspired by Michael Singer’s book *The Surrender Experiment*, try consciously letting go of the need to control a specific situation in your life. This could be something small, like letting go of the need to be right in a conversation or something larger, like surrendering to the flow of a challenging project at work. Observe what happens when you release your grip and allow

things to unfold naturally.

☞ **Process over product:** Shift your focus from the end goal to the process itself. Instead of obsessing over achieving a specific outcome, find joy in the journey, in the small steps and daily actions that contribute to your overall progress.

☞ **Cultivate gratitude:** Gratitude helps us to appreciate the present moment and recognise the abundance that surrounds us. It shifts our focus from what we lack to what we have, fostering a sense of contentment and inner peace, which reduces attachment to external outcomes.

☞ **Embrace imperfection:** Perfectionism is the antithesis of *Wu Wei*. Allow yourself to make mistakes, to experiment and to embrace the beauty of imperfection. Remember, the journey is just as important as the destination, and that true growth often arises from our missteps and detours.

Cultivating detachment is an ongoing practice, a subtle shift in perspective that requires conscious effort and mindful awareness. It is about recognising our attachments, gently releasing our grip and surrendering to the wisdom of the *Tao*.

Dr Praveena Rajendra is a certified mental health and awareness practitioner specialising in narcissistic abuse recovery. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com



Tan and KMSSG founder GuruMatha Annai Shree Kriyalakshmi Deviyyar at the inauguration of the soup kitchen. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

Tan Sri Vincent Tan – champion of charity

TAN Sri Vincent Tan is once again on his charitable journey (Jan 13, *theSun*).

The founder of Berjaya Corporation Berhad is collaborating with an Indian charitable society, Kriyalakshmi Mandir Sai Selva Gurukul (KMSSG), to launch an initiative aimed at providing free food to communities in underserved areas.

Brahmarpanam Soup Kitchen will undertake the preparation of meals and serve them in an environmentally friendly manner. This initiative seeks to alleviate hunger and improve the well-being of those in need.

The free-meals initiative will not only be

carried out on the streets but will also be delivered to homes of the needy.

Tan Sri is championing the initiative by supplying fresh vegetables from Berjaya Hills through his company Veggie Nature Sdn Bhd, a division of Berjaya Hills Resort Berhad.

All Malaysians, especially those fortunate to have food on their tables, should express their heartfelt gratitude to Tan Sri, who has consistently answered the call for charity with genuine compassion.

His efforts are a testament to his spiritual nature and commitment to giving back to society.

Moreover, Tan Sri is colour-blind to race and creed, exemplifying inclusivity and unity in his charitable work.

Kudos to Berjaya Corp for playing a role in addressing hunger and supporting those in need.

Tan Sri is also actively involved with the renowned Tzu-Chi Foundation, further cementing his legacy as a champion of charity.

Tan Sri Vincent Tan is truly an epitome of corporate social responsibility.

**R. Rama Chandran
Petaling Jaya**

Key to blissful marriage

MARRIAGE is a sacred union bringing together two individuals from different backgrounds, whether through love or arranged proposals.

Regardless of the path taken, many marriages face the pressures of daily life and, unfortunately, some succumb to them.

There are increasing reports of rising divorce rates in the country, and I have witnessed relatives and friends go through divorces, some amicable and some acrimonious.

While a consensual divorce may be less painful, when the separation is contentious, it is often the children who suffer the most. The emotional toll on them can be lifelong, scarring them psychologically and leaving them with negative perceptions of marriage.

It is not easy to make a marriage work; it takes a lot of commitment, compromise and patience. This is why my sister, family and I are exceptionally blessed and grateful to God for being able to celebrate the 60th wedding anniversary of my parents today.

Theirs was an arranged marriage, and like all couples, it has not been a bed of roses. There were ups and downs, disagreements and difficult moments. But there were also beautiful times, precious memories and great joy – moments that ultimately outweighed the hardships.

They have taught us that while saying “I do” may be the easiest part of a marriage, the hardest challenge is being able to say “I can” during troubled times and persevering through it all “until death do us part”.

To my wonderful parents, who have been exemplary in showing us what it means to be “the perfect couple”, we thank you for being our unwavering pillars of love and strength.

May your lives continue to be filled with joy and blessings.

Happy 60th anniversary, Mummy and Daddy!
We love you.

**Shan
Seremban**

Tropicana Aman wins Fiabci's best housing masterplan in M'sia award

PETALING JAYA: Tropicana Aman, a development by Tropicana Corporation Bhd, is named the Best Housing Masterplan in Malaysia at the Fiabci Malaysia Property Award 2024.

This is a pinnacle achievement for Tropicana Aman, a resort-style, community-focused township located on 863 acres of premium land in Kota Kemuning.

Over 11 years ago, Tropicana began working on the blueprint for Tropicana Aman with the vision of creating a resort-style, community-focused township.

The first phase, Arahsia Residences was launched in 2015, two years after the concept was conceived and achieved a 100% take-up within the first month. Other completed and sold-out phases include Bayan Residences, Cheria Residences, Dalia Residences, Elemen Residences, Freesia Residences, Gemala Residences, Aman 1 urban home, Triana shop offices and Sinaria shop offices.

"The award not only recognises the meticulous planning and innovative concept behind our developments but also validates our commitment

to creating harmonious and eco-conscious communities. With the emphasis on integrating green spaces, accessible amenities and modern lifestyle offerings, Tropicana has proven its ability to design vibrant neighbourhoods that prioritise both environmental needs and residents' wellbeing. Aligned with our ongoing mantra to "Redefine the Art of Living", Tropicana aspires to continue leading the way in sustainable living, building confidence and trust among its stakeholders," shared Din Tan, group managing director of Tropicana.

SP Setia's recent Semenyih developments fully taken up

SEMENYIH: Both commercial and residential offerings by SP Setia Bhd at Setia EcoHill, Setia EcoHill2 and Setia Mayuri in Semenyih have seen take-ups and handovers.

One of Setia's latest offerings there, two-storey shops Pines Avenue at Setia EcoHill 2 comprises 14 units in total with built-up sizes between 2,988 sq ft and 4,421 sq ft, and prices from RM1.3 million onwards.

Launched in October, and scheduled to be completed by October 2027, Pines Avenue is a waterfront commercial development nestled within 18-acre South Creek, which is one of the largest public parks in the area. It is fully taken up.

Launched in the same review period of October 2024, Baris Place 2 at Setia Mayuri comprises 16 units of two-storey shop lots with built-ups ranging from 3,172 sq ft to 4,054 sq ft, and prices ranging from RM1.5 million onwards. Baris Place 2 is banking on the success of the existing Baris Place shops, which have achieved full tenancy and have become a thriving focal point along Jalan Broga.

Meanwhile, French-inspired one- and two-storey bungalows Reineville at Setia EcoHill has held its handover and Owners Appreciation Day on Nov 24, 2024.

SP Setia Bhd divisional general manager Koh Sooi Meng said they are delighted to share that their recent launches in Semenyih, namely Pines Avenue at Setia EcoHill 2 and Baris Place 2 at Setia Mayuri have garnered 100% take-ups respectively.

Koh also shared their handover of Reineville at Setia EcoHill, which is one of their upper range products, which is situated next to the award winning 13-acre Oriental Garden in the township.

First launched in December 2022, Reineville at Setia EcoHill was introduced at RM1.398 million. "Compared to the price of our latest launch Casaville, which has seen a significant appreciation with current prices ranging between RM1.48 million and RM1.49 million, as of December 2024. This notable growth reflects the increasing value of our developments," he said.

With a total GDV of RM60 million, Reineville forms part of the vibrant Setia EcoHill township, which spans 5.6 acres. The freehold township is poised to have a total population of 30,000 with 7,500 units of homes once it is completed in 2030.

Meanwhile, Pines Avenue forms part of Setia EcoHill 2, which has a total GDV of RM5 billion. The mixed township has a total land bank of 1,010 acres, with more than 80 acres reserved for green parks while approximately 17 acres of parks earmarked for the South Creek and 18 acres of Adventure Park.

Baris Place 2 is part of the 209-acre mixed township of Setia Mayuri, which was first launched in 2019. The freehold township has a total GDV of RM700 million with 10 year development period. As of June 30, 2024, approximately 195 units have been launched.

"We are confident that our townships and developments in Semenyih will continue its trajectory of growth, and we will have plans to launch new products here in FY25," said Koh.

IJM Land bullish on local landed property market

BY JOHN GILBERT
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KUALA LUMPUR: IJM Land Bhd views the outlook for the landed property market in Malaysia as positive despite the ongoing economic challenges.

The property developer also sees the demand for high-quality, sustainable homes that combine luxury and functionality continue to rise.

The positive stance comes after the recently launched Anthea by IJM Rimbayu Sdn Bhd, a premier township development by IJM Land.

Anthea is a high-end residential development covering 20.85 acres, with a projected GDV of RM380 million.

IJM Land chief operating officer Datuk Chai Kian Soon said despite the challenges posed by the current economic climate, including the rising cost of living and stringent bank lending guidelines, IJM Rimbayu has strategically positioned Anthea to meet the demands of the luxury market.

He said Anthea caters to high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) seeking long-term value and quality, with prices ranging from RM1.5 million for super link units to RM2.6 million for semi-D homes.

"IJM Rimbayu is strategically positioning Anthea as an exclusive enclave tailored to HNWIs.

"Anthea is attracting strong interest from both local purchasers and foreign investors.

Local buyers are drawn to Anthea's natural surroundings and strategic location near essential services, schools, and leisure facilities.

"This reflects a broader Malaysian trend favouring properties that integrate luxury with wellness and nature-focused living.

"Foreign investors, particularly from regional markets, see Anthea as a unique investment opportunity within a highly sought-after area," Chai said.

He said the Anthea development is expected to sustain strong demand, driven by its blend of luxury and sustainability.

"Its exclusive design and limited availability have generated high interest, with buyers keen to secure remaining units," Chai added.

On costs, Chai said IJM Land has effectively managed rising construction costs through strategic planning, strong supplier partnerships, and efficient project management.

He emphasised that using sustainable, high-quality materials including green-certified components and low-VOC paints, the company has maintained Anthea's premium finishes and eco-friendly standards without compromising quality.

➤ Group sees demand for high-quality, sustainable homes that combine luxury and functionality continuing to rise



Anthea caters to high-net-worth individuals seeking long-term value and quality, with prices ranging from RM1.5 million for super-link units to RM2.6 million for semi-detached homes.

"IJM Land also focuses on operational efficiency, continuously refining its processes to minimise waste and ensure the longevity and value of the homes.

"This foresight has allowed the Anthea development to be a testament to quality, even when faced with the economic challenges of the current market," Chai said.

He added the Anthea development is among the final three high-end landed development parcels in the IJM Rimbayu township, offering a unique blend of luxury and sustainable, nature-integrated living.

Its exclusivity sets a new standard for the community, while IJM Land's commitment to preserving natural beauty and maintaining exclusivity will guide the development of the remaining parcels.

"Looking ahead, IJM Land is committed to creating sustainable, thoughtfully designed homes that cater to the changing preferences of modern buyers.

"Future developments will further prioritise green living while continuing to deliver exceptional quality, value, and an enhanced lifestyle for residents," said Chai.

Elaborating further, Chai said that by focusing on premium, eco-conscious designs and exclusive amenities, IJM Rimbayu presents a compelling proposition – a lifestyle surrounded by green spaces that enhance residents' well-being.

He said Anthea's blend of luxury and sustainability ensures its long-term investment value, even in uncertain economic conditions as it focus on quality and a tailored living experience that meets the demands of buyers seeking an exclusive community.

Since its launch, Chai said the Anthea development has received a highly positive response, with significant interest from both local and international buyers with strong take-up rate.

"The exclusivity of just 180 homes has sparked a sense of urgency, as prospective buyers recognise the rarity and high value of this development.

"The unique design elements, coupled with the eco-friendly features and prime location, have positioned Anthea as a standout in the luxury landed property market.

"With strong demand expected to continue over the next year, Anthea appeals to buyers seeking both luxury and sustainability," Chai said.

He said given the exclusivity of the development, interest is anticipated to remain high, with many eager to secure one of the remaining units before they are sold out.

"Anthea's carefully curated environment, surrounded by nature yet close to urban conveniences, ensures that it will continue to attract discerning buyers who seek a holistic living experience," Chai said.



Malaysia's air passenger traffic set to soar in 2025

➤ Expected to surpass previous record of 109.3 million logged in 2019: Loke

PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Aviation Commission (Mavcom) forecasts that Malaysia's air passenger traffic will reach between 105.8 million and 112.9 million passengers this year, according to Transport Minister Anthony Loke.

He said this year's passenger traffic is expected to surpass the previous record of 109.3 million set in 2019, representing an increase of 8.4-15.6% year-on-year (y-o-y).

"This growth is expected to be driven by an increase in airline seat capacity, rising demand for international travel, and overall improvements in household income levels.

"Airlines are also projected to boost their capacity by 15.8% y-o-y in 2025, driven by an expected 21.1% y-o-y growth in domestic travel," Loke said during a press conference on Malaysia's 2024 passenger and cargo traffic performance and the outlook for 2025.

He highlighted that Malaysia's air passenger traffic has now recovered to 90% of pre-pandemic levels, marking a significant rebound from the sharp decline experienced during Covid-19.

In 2020, passenger numbers dropped to 26.7 million, with most movements occurring early in the year before restrictions were imposed. "The situation worsened in 2021 when international borders were closed," he added.

However, Loke said the supply chain remains a major challenge for the industry due to the pandemic, causing delays in



Loke speaking during a press conference at the Ministry of Transport in Putrajaya yesterday. On the left is Mavcom executive chairman Datuk Seri Saripuddin Kasim. — **BERNAMAPIC**

aircraft manufacturing, component shortages, and global logistics disruptions.

Despite these issues, Malaysian airlines are proactively addressing challenges by reassessing cost structures, optimising maintenance schedules, renegotiating supplier contracts, and reducing overhead expenses.

"Looking ahead to this year, the macroeconomic outlook is positive, with global economic growth projected to remain stable at 3.2% y-o-y, while the Asean region's economy is expected to grow by 4.5% y-o-y.

"Malaysia's gross domestic product is forecast to grow by 4.5-5.5% y-o-y, while the ringgit is expected to stabilise at RM4.45 against the US dollar. Additionally, average fuel costs are anticipated to decline to 26.4% of operating expenses (2024: 28.9%), alleviating some of the cost pressures on

airlines," Loke said.

Meanwhile, Mavcom predicts air cargo volumes to grow by 4.5-8.5% y-o-y, supported by economic recovery and continued expansion in the e-commerce sector.

In 2024, Malaysia's air passenger traffic grew by 14.3% y-o-y to 97.1 million passengers, driven by growth in Asean and international segments, which increased by 19.8% and 38.9%, respectively. This represents 89% of the 2019 pre-pandemic level of 109.3 million passengers.

Domestic passenger traffic grew by 2.2%, supported by factors such as increased airline seat capacity, visa exemptions for travelers from China and India, and improved connectivity to major destinations including China, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Australia, and Gulf countries. — Bernama

SC to issue toolkit to help listed firms transition to achieve NSRF compliance

KUALA LUMPUR: The Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) is concerned about the ability of Group 2 and Group 3 listed companies to comply with the National Sustainability Reporting Framework (NSRF).

As a result, chairman Datuk Mohammad Faiz Azmi said, the SC will launch a toolkit to help companies transition from the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) to the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) guidelines.

"Last year, we paid 100 accountants to do GRI (and) we will probably do it for another 50 this year. We are about to launch a toolkit that gets you from GRI to ISSB, and we are going to give it to all for free," he said during the launch of PwC Malaysia's inaugural Corporate Directors Survey 2024.

Mohammad Faiz said Malaysia is keen to learn from Singapore, which has developed model accounts for ISSB based on the real estate sector. "It is interesting, but we have sectors like construction, palm oil and finance — what about them? That is why we are now sending people to replicate what was done in Singapore."

He said that many large listed companies have already started the process as they need to comply with other jurisdictions. "My worry is for the rest (of the companies) next year."

Faiz said the SC has introduced an initiative called "PACE", designed to help companies successfully adopt the NSRF, offering a wide range of resources, including policy guidance, emissions calculator, and capacity-building programmes, to ensure companies of all sizes can meet the sustainability reporting requirements.

At the Asean level, the SC is pushing and promoting a regional taxonomy for adaptation called "MARS" (mitigation, adaptation, resilience, and sustainability) and on the carbon market.

Faiz said the SC will chair the Asean Capital Markets Forum, a high-level grouping of capital market regulators from all 10 Asean jurisdictions, enabling it to chart a regional capital market plan for the next five years. — Bernama

Ringgit recovery hinges on two key factors: Economist

BY AIMIE SHAZRIE
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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's ringgit is navigating a challenging path in 2025, with a mix of global headwinds and domestic opportunities shaping its outlook while the currency remains under pressure due to persistent US dollar strength, rising US Treasury yields and trade-related vulnerabilities.

Maybank foreign exchange research head Saktiandi Supaat (pic) said the ringgit's recovery hinges on two key factors — sustained investment momentum and eventual stabilisation of the US dollar.

"Malaysia's domestic investment upcycle, particularly initiatives such as the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone, is expected to bolster sentiment towards the ringgit. These projects are driving optimism for long-term economic growth, with the government's commitment to fiscal consolidation offering further support.

"Narrowing budget deficits and the potential for positive sovereign rating revisions could help anchor investor confidence,



providing a counterbalance to external pressures," he said at the Maybank Investment Bank 2025 Outlook virtual media briefing on Tuesday.

However, Saktiandi noted that Malaysia's high export exposure to China remains a double-edged sword.

"The ringgit's sensitivity to RMB (renminbi) fluctuations has been well-documented, with estimates showing a 0.6% to 0.7% impact on the ringgit for every 1% move in the RMB. This vulnerability is compounded by ongoing softness in the RMB, which is projected to weaken further against the dollar in 2025. As Malaysia's second-largest export market, China's economic trajectory will remain a critical factor in shaping the ringgit's performance," he said.

The broader strength of the US dollar poses another significant challenge, Saktiandi said, forecasting the ringgit-dollar exchange rate to peak at RM4.70 by mid-2025 before easing to around RM4.45 by year-end.

"This trajectory reflects global market dynamics, including elevated US Treasury yields and the Federal Reserve's cautious

stance on interest rates. Dollar strength is expected to remain a dominant theme through the second and third quarters of 2025, exerting downward pressure on the ringgit," he added.

Saktiandi said Bank Negara Malaysia's policy stability could provide some relief amid these headwinds. With the central bank maintaining its policy rate and refraining from aggressive easing, Malaysia's yield differentials may remain relatively stable compared to regional peers.

"This stability is expected to limit the extent of ringgit depreciation, even as higher-yielding currencies like the Indonesian rupiah and Philippine peso face risks of rate cuts."

Saktiandi said that while the ringgit faces undeniable external challenges, Malaysia's improving fiscal position and strong investment narrative offer a foundation for resilience.

"The interplay between global macro-economic forces and domestic policy measures will determine whether the currency can recover meaningfully in the second half of 2025. For now, market participants are keeping a close eye on the dual forces of investment upside and dollar stabilisation as the key drivers for the ringgit's path forward," he said.

U Mobile signs MoU with CIMB on financing for 5G rollout

KUALA LUMPUR: U Mobile Sdn Bhd has inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with CIMB Bank Bhd to extend financing support for its upcoming 5G network rollout.

This MoU marks the latest financing partnership between U Mobile and CIMB, of which, in 2021, the bank participated in a RM1.2 billion facility to U Mobile, which was later upsized to RM1.4 billion in 2023.

U Mobile CEO Wong Heang Tuck said CIMB is its long-standing financing partner and shares their commitment to drive innovation and growth within the country's economy via 5G, in line with the government's goal of achieving high-income nation status with a focus on digitalisation.

"We believe CIMB's financial backing will further strengthen U Mobile's ability to ensure a rapid and cost-efficient second 5G network rollout that will bring benefits to enterprises, consumers and the public sector," he said in a statement yesterday.

This MoU follows the recent appointment of U Mobile as Malaysia's second 5G network provider. — Bernama



HLIB: Conditions favour Malaysian property sector

➤ Stable mortgage rates, tax reliefs to stimulate demand, aid recovery in 2025: Investment bank CEO

BY HAYATUN RAZAK
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KUALA LUMPUR: Stable mortgage rates and tax reliefs are set to stimulate Malaysia's property sector in 2025, according to Hong Leong Investment Bank (HLIB).

HLIB CEO Lee Jim Leng said government initiatives are expected to spur demand while aiding the market's recovery by making homeownership accessible and contribute to long-term growth.

"The sector's optimistic outlook is supported by the government's initiatives outlined in Budget 2025. Notably, the tax reliefs of up to RM7,000 for first-time homebuyers purchasing properties priced up to RM500,000, and up to RM5,000 for homes

priced between RM500,000 and RM750,000.

"These initiatives are expected to spur demand while aiding the market's recovery," Lee said in her opening address at 18th Bursa-HLIB Stratum focus series titled "Property Sector: Entering a New Cycle" yesterday.

At the same time, she said, the current 3% Overnight Policy Rate and stable mortgage rates in Malaysia bodes well for demand in the property sector.

"These low interest rates make ownership more affordable for those looking to invest in the near future," she added.

Lee said with a stable employment growth rate and an expected gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 4.9% for Malaysia this year, according to HLIB's projection, the economy remains on firm ground, providing the right conditions for sustained growth in the property sector.

"At HLIB, we believe a stable employment growth rate and a projected GDP growth of 4.9% this year, the economy remains on firm ground. These positive indicators provide the right conditions for sustained growth and a virtuous cycle of demand and investment that contributes to Malaysia's broader economic development.

"While these are promising signs, it is

necessary for continued innovative strategies and collaboration within the industry to tackle the challenges," she added.

Lee said affordability remains a key factor for the sector. She pointed out that 2025 is expected to see higher wages for civil servants and the introduction of a higher minimum wage.

"This incremental increase in disposable income is a much welcome factor in catalysing demand and raising affordability for properties across the country," Lee said.

According to the National Property Information Centre, Malaysia's property transaction values increased to RM105.65 billion in the first half of 2024. This marks 23.8% year-on-year growth, the highest in five years. Moreover, the Kuala Lumpur Property Index is set to rise by 31.17% in 2024.

The residential overhang situation has also improved, with a 12.3% reduction in volume of unsold properties.

However, Lee said rising living costs, inflationary pressures, and high unsold inventories continue to pose challenges for market recovery. "Amidst our optimism, we believe challenges still persist. Tackling these challenges will require collaborative effort and innovative strategies," she added.

MRO to drive Malaysia, US collaboration in aerospace industry

KUALA LUMPUR: Maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) services are poised to become the primary area of collaboration between Malaysia and the United States in the aerospace sector, according to the US International Trade Administration's international trade specialist, Stefanie Merchant.

Merchant emphasised the critical role of engines and engine parts in the US aerospace industry, and therefore, Malaysia could play a key role in meeting this demand.

"The opportunities extend to general parts for fixed-wing aircraft, encompassing components as varied as nuts and bolts to larger structures," she said during the SelectUSA Webinar: Investment Opportunities in the US Aerospace Market yesterday.

She also called Malaysian companies to engage with major US aerospace manufacturers to understand their supply chain needs to pave the way for strategic partnerships.

Merchant said MRO services in the US were expecting unprecedented demand, with the growth being supported by the integration of digital tools and artificial intelligence to streamline processes such as blade inspection and maintenance record management.

"The need for skilled labour in this sector is also rising to meet the growing workload," she noted.

Moreover, Merchant said the increasing demand for parts to support fixed-wing aircraft production, including landing gear, and the robust market for engine MRO services in North America, is expected to account for 22.5% of global demand this year, which presents further opportunities for collaboration.

Additionally, she pointed to broader growth in commercial markets with dual defence applications, including unmanned aircraft systems and propulsion systems, in which demand has surged due to spillover effects from defence to commercial applications.

Meanwhile, National Aerospace Industry Corporation Malaysia CEO Prof Shamsul Kamar Abu Samah said the entity is heavily investing in developing future-ready professionals for the aerospace sector in Malaysia.

He said this mission was in line with the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 to position Malaysia as a global aerospace hub while focusing on innovation, fostering strategic partnerships and ensuring sustainable growth in this critical industry. Malaysia's aerospace exports reached an impressive RM4.87 billion, while imports stood at RM10.93 billion from January to October 2024.

"We have shown resilience and growth with key markets like Asia Pacific and Europe, driving demand for our aircraft parts and components," he added. - Bernama

Titijaya sees growing demand for ToD developments

PETALING JAYA: Heading into the property market of 2025, urban lifestyle developer Titijaya Land Bhd sees growing demand for transit-oriented development (ToD) projects, as well as increased appetite for affordable properties with prices ranging from RM300,000 to RM500,000 in response to concerns over inflation and higher living costs.

In releasing its market outlook for 2025 yesterday, Titijaya said in a statement that it aims to provide shareholders and industry stakeholders with insights into key real estate market trends as well as the strategic direction of the group.

The group believes it is well-positioned to respond to these key market trends, thanks to its strategic portfolio of ongoing projects and land bank, as well as its focus on innovative and customer-centric real estate developments.

Titijaya group managing director Datuk Lim Poh Yit said: "As we enter 2025, we see rising demand for ToD projects, particularly among the dynamic younger generation of city workers. Well-designed ToD projects deliver a vibrant blend of urban living and work experiences that has proven popular in major city areas across Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore."

He added that they also see the wave of public transport infrastructure projects being developed or planned across Malaysia as tailwinds for the ToD segment.

More importantly, he said, the ToD concept aligns with their commitment to environmental, social and governance practices within their development portfolio.

"By concentrating offices, retail, and residences within the catchment area of transit stations, ToD projects make public transport more attractive and efficient, reducing dependence on personal vehicles and promoting shorter commutes. As a result, ToD typically translates into higher productivity and a smaller carbon footprint," said Lim.

In anticipation of this trend, in 2019 they embarked on Riviera City, a flagship integrated ToD development in KL Sentral. The first phase of Riviera City, The Riv, has been completed and fully sold and they have launched Phase 2, The Ria.

Riviera City is an RM1.5 billion gross

development value (GDV) project in KL Sentral, just 100 metres from the Tun Sambanthan Monorail Station and within walking distance of the KL Sentral transport hub.

Jointly developed by Titijaya and Prasarana Integrated Development Sdn Bhd, Riviera City is set to become a landmark integrated development, blending riverfront retail spaces, modern office suites, and luxury serviced apartments across three towers.

Phase 1 of Riviera City, The Riv, is a 54-storey tower block comprising 784 office suites. With a GDV of RM374 million, The Riv has been completed and fully sold.

Building on the success of The Riv, Titijaya launched Phase 2 of Riviera City - The Ria - in July 2024. The Ria has a GDV of RM588 million and is slated for completion in first-quarter 2028. The 63-storey development has 752 units in two- to three-bedroom configurations, with built-ups ranging between 650 and 800 sq ft and priced from RM685,000 upwards.

Lim said: "The increase in OPR (Overnight Policy Rate) in 2023 resulted in higher monthly mortgage repayments for many Malaysian property buyers. Bank Negara has increased the OPR five times, totalling 125 basis points, since May 2022. Typically, those who have taken larger loans, particularly those who obtained floating-rate loans, will be impacted the most by higher OPR.

With concerns over rising inflation, subsidy rationalisation and a potential rate hike in 2025, buyers are tightening their belts, Lim noted.

He said RM500,000-RM700,000 used to be a range that was favoured by local property buyers, but this has changed due to lower-than-expected spending power and higher living expenses. As a result, buyers who previously favoured units priced at RM500,000 are now looking for units priced at RM300,000.

"Our focus in FYE2024 was on clearing our inventory, with the successful handover of multiple developments. FYE2025 will see the launch of several new projects, including Phase 2 of the residential development at Newton @ Jalan Ampang, and the Seri Residency landed residential project in North Klang," Lim added.



Lim says buyers who previously favoured units priced at RM500,000 are now looking for units priced at RM300,000.

Fajarbaru rebrands itself as FBG

PETALING JAYA: Fajarbaru Builder Group Bhd, a turnkey contractor and property developer, has rebranded itself as FBG Bhd.

The company said in a statement the rebranding reflects FBG's commitment to evolve with the times, positioning itself as a leader in delivering innovative quality construction and property development projects with sustainability being at focus across all the industries that it serves.

With a renewed focus on sustainability, this rebranding is a strategic move to align with the group's vision of fostering a forward-thinking approach to tackle the ever-evolving needs and pave the way for a better future while maintaining its dedication to quality and service excellence.

In line with the rebranding, FBG's subsidiaries Fajarbaru Builder Sdn Bhd and Fajarbaru Land (M) Sdn Bhd have been renamed FBG Builder

Sdn Bhd and FBG Land Sdn Bhd respectively.

FBG Group executive chairman Tan Sri Chan Kong Choy said: "Building upon close to 50 years of heritage, we are now embarking on the next chapter of our story as we sharpen our focus towards the future. This rebranding is not just about celebrating our past, it is about defining our future rooted in sustainability and is a testament towards our enduring legacy as well as our vision to leave a positive imprint on the communities that we serve."

"Having said that, we are embracing a renewed focus on innovating for a better world. Our new tagline "The Makers of Tomorrow" embodies this very commitment, signalling our dedication towards creating a sustainable legacy for generations to come. I hope that we continue to foster long-term trust among our customers, investors, as well as business partners."



MIA showcases transformative accounting, finance tech solutions

BY AIMIE SHAZRIE
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KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) has organised the second edition of MIA Accounting & Financial Technology showcase 2025 (MIA AFT), a one-day showcase for transformative tech solutions specially geared towards accountancy and finance professionals.

MIA president Datuk Seri Mohamad Zabidi Ahmad said the goal is to boost productivity and future-proof the profession in an era of rapid technological change.

"Guided by the MIA Digital Technology Blueprint, the MIA AFT is part of MIA's ongoing commitment to champion digital transformation.

"We envision this showcase as a one-stop platform to streamline the search for cutting-edge digital solutions tailored to the needs of accounting and finance professionals," he said at the event held at Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (Mitec) yesterday.

Zabidi said delegates can enjoy access to a futuristic exhibition, live demonstrations and expert insights from tech experts and business leaders.

"Delegates will witness firsthand how technologies like AI, automation, analytics, blockchain, and cloud computing are revolutionising finance and accounting processes, transforming how we work, and shaping the future of the profession," he emphasised.

With the theme of "Be Tech Driven, Be Future

Proofed", the MIA AFT leverages on MIA's strategic collaboration approach to connect close to 2,000 delegates and 40 leading technology companies at the forefront of change.

To help strengthen efficiency, transparency and regulation, the technology partners participating in MIA AFT 2025 showcased practical and innovative e-invoicing solutions to help businesses and practitioners adapt to the e-invoicing framework and implementation phases, while ensuring robust compliance.

Members attending the AFT will be awarded six CPE (continuing professional education) hours by MIA to support their CPE compliance requirements while enhancing their professional development needs.

MIA CEO Wan Ahmad Rudirman Wan Razak

said at MIA AFT 2025, participants will discover various ways in which technology solutions are integrating automation to revolutionise financial processes and enhance compliance.

"This event provides insights on best practices for incorporating innovative technologies into accounting and finance workflows – ultimately aiming to enhance decision-making, boost productivity and reduce costs

He expressed confidence that the MIA AFT will help future-proof accountancy professionals for a fast-changing tech landscape and the evolving digital economy.

"This is part of our continuous advocacy for digital transformation to ensure that our more than 40,000 members are future fit and relevant to employers and businesses."

Colform eyes RM41.19m from ACE Market IPO

➤ Group poised for expansion with enhanced manufacturing capabilities and wider market reach

KUALA LUMPUR: Colform Group Bhd, an established steel and building material specialist in East Malaysia, launched its prospectus in conjunction with its proposed initial public offering (IPO) on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia Securities Bhd.

This IPO, Colform in a statement yesterday said represents a pivotal step in its journey, enabling the group to expand its operations and solidify its market presence in steel manufacturing, trading, and installation services.

With over 20 years of experience, Colform has solidified its role as a trusted partner, delivering end-to-end steel solutions to support Malaysia's construction development from concept to completion. Headquartered in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah – Colform's offerings span across various types of downstream steel products such as roofing sheets, wall claddings and IBS steel framing systems – providing cost-efficient, labour-saving solutions tailored to meet industry standards. Colform serves a diverse clientele including government, commercial, and private sectors, embodying reliability and innovation in every project.

Through this IPO, Colform aims to raise RM41.19 million via the issuance of 114.42 million new shares at an issue price of RM0.36 per share.

The proceeds will be allocated as follows: RM9 million for setting up a colour coil coating production line at the Kota Kinabalu factory; RM4.5 million for constructing a new storage facility in Kota Kinabalu; RM5.1 million for business expansion into Peninsular Malaysia including establishing a branch office and leased



From left: Colform non-independent executive directors Kang Phui Ting and Kang Ah Hin, Kang Ket Hung, independent non-executive chairman Datuk Ali Ahmad Hamid, non-independent executive director Kang Phui Yie and Chong.

factory in Klang; RM18.09 million for working capital purposes; and RM4.5 million for listing expenses.

Applications for the IPO opened at 10am yesterday following the prospectus launch, and will close on Jan 23. Colform is expected to debut on the ACE Market on Feb 10. At an IPO price of RM0.36 per share, the company's market capitalisation upon listing will stand at RM216 million.

Managing director Kang Ket Hung said the launch of their IPO prospectus marks a major milestone in Colform Group Bhd's history as since their inception in 2003, Colform has grown from humble beginnings into a provider of comprehensive steel solutions.

"From concept to completion, we deliver tailored services spanning design, production, and installation, including Industrialised Building System framing systems. Our ability to adapt and evolve with changing customer

demands has been key to our success, enabling us to offer innovative, tailor-made solutions that meet industry needs," he added.

This IPO, Kang said will enable them to expand their capabilities with a new colour coil coating production line, enhance operational efficiency, and establish their presence in Peninsular Malaysia.

"Guided by quality, precision, and innovation, we are committed to creating lasting value for our stakeholders while contributing to Malaysia's infrastructure development," he added.

Mercury Securities Sdn Bhd corporate finance head Eric Chong said this IPO represents a new chapter of growth and opportunity for the group, and they are honoured to be part of their corporate journey.

Mercury Securities Sdn Bhd is the principal adviser, sponsor, sole underwriter and sole placement agent for Colform Group Bhd.

ILM kicks off 2025 with US\$1.27b short-term sukuk auction

KUALA LUMPUR: The International Islamic Liquidity Management Corporation (ILM), an international organisation that develops and issues short-term Shariah-compliant financial instruments, has completed its first auction for 2025 with a reissuance of an aggregate US\$1.27 billion (RM5.7 billion) short-term sukuk across three different tenors of one, three, and six-month respectively.

The three series were priced competitively at 4.43% for US\$500 million for 1-month tenor; 4.55% for US\$610 million for 3-month tenor; and 4.43% for US\$160 million for 6-month tenor.

The ILM's sukuk reissuance on Tuesday saw a competitive tender amongst the Primary Dealers and Investors globally, with a strong orderbook of US\$2.75 billion, representing an average bid-to-cover ratio of 216.5%.

CEO Mohamad Safri Shahul Hamid said: "We are delighted to kick off 2025 from where we left off last year with a successful auction, reflecting sustained market confidence in the ILM's short-term sukuk as high quality Shariah-compliant liquidity management tools. The strong and robust demand across all tenors underscores the global Islamic investors' appetite for stable and reliable liquidity solutions amidst the ongoing market volatility and market uncertainty in recent weeks."

He added the sell-off in the global bond market since the beginning of the month has intensified further post-strong US job report that was out last week, resulting in a recent surge in global yields.

Despite all these, he said they welcomed Tuesday's auction results at competitive profit rates (compared to December 2024), with twice the size of total issuance month-on-month. For the record, Tuesday's transaction totalling US\$1.27 billion also represents the ILM's largest ever short-term sukuk auction in the month of January, clearly reinforcing their strong commitment to deliver innovative short term sukuk offerings tailored to meeting the evolving needs of Islamic financial institutions worldwide.

The issuance forms part of the ILM's "A-1" (S&P) and "F1" (Fitch Ratings) rated US\$6 billion short-term sukuk issuance programme. The total amount of ILM sukuk outstanding stands at US\$4.14 billion.

YTL Power expected to gain NVEU status under new US AI chip policy

KUALA LUMPUR: YTL Power International Bhd is expected to be able to attain national validated end-user (NVEU) status under the new US global artificial intelligence (AI) chip control policy, according to CIMB Securities Sdn Bhd.

In a note, CIMB Securities said this is due to the off-takers for YTL Power's AI data centres (DCs) being US hyper-scalers including Nvidia, which are not subject to the limits.

"YTL Power is the only non-US company selected by Nvidia in Asia to deploy its latest chips

on the DGX Cloud AI platform," it said.

CIMB Securities noted that based on the latest Framework for AI Diffusion, the US has set the cumulative installed base allocation of total processing performance per NVEU per country at 1.58 billion for the fourth quarter of 2025 (Q4'25), 4.27 billion for Q4'26, and 5.06 billion for Q1-Q4'27.

"We estimate this is equivalent to about 43,000, 118,000, and 140,000 B200 graphic processing units (GPUs), respectively.

"Currently, for YTL Power, we have factored in cumulative deliveries of 12,000 B200 GPUs in mid-2025, 36,000 at end-2025, and 60,000 at end-2026," it added.

Meanwhile, CIMB Securities has maintained its "buy" call for YTL Power with a 4% higher target price of RM5.20 per share, following higher earnings from its UK-based unit Wessex Water, following the Water Services Regulation Authority's final determination on the 2024 price review. – Bernama

Indonesia to push social media protections

➤ Govt plans to issue regulation setting minimum age for users

JAKARTA: Indonesia will impose interim child protection guidelines on social media companies while the government carves out a law to set a minimum age for users of the platforms, a senior Communications Ministry official said yesterday.

On Monday, Communications Minister Meutya Hafid said the government planned to issue a regulation to set a minimum age for social media users, after discussing the proposal to protect children online with President Prabowo Subianto.

The plan follows Australia's decision to ban

children under 16 from accessing social media, with fines for tech giants from Instagram and Facebook owner Meta to TikTok, owned by China's ByteDance, if they failed to prevent children from accessing their platforms.

"What the minister means is that the government is headed for the direction of a stronger regulation on age limit, which is through the formation of a law," Alexander Sabar, a senior official at the Communications and Digital Ministry, told Reuters.

In the meantime, the government will issue a regulation for digital platforms, including social media firms, to adhere to child protection guidelines, he said, without providing details.

"The emphasis for the government regulation is child protection - how they are protected from physical, mental, or moral perils," he said, adding the regulation would not totally limit children's access to social media.

Meta and TikTok did not respond to requests for comment.

Nurmayanti, a 46-year-old mother of three who goes by one name, said she agreed with the plan to curtail social media content, particularly content promoting pornography or discrimination.

"They now can freely open social media so that is concerning to us as parents," she said, adding the law must be strict and clear.

However, Anis Hidayah, a commissioner at Indonesia's main human rights body, said that limiting the internet for children was important but the government must be careful to not curb their right to information.

Nearly 50% of children under 12 in tech-savvy Indonesia use the internet with some respondents of that age group using Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, according to a survey by the Indonesia internet service providers' association. - Reuters

Vietnam signs nuclear cooperation deal with Russia's Rosatom

HANOI: Vietnam and Russia signed an agreement on nuclear energy and several cooperation deals during a visit to Hanoi by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

Vietnam aims to restart its nuclear energy programme having suspended it for years, as it needs to boost power generation to feed its growing industrial sector, a driver of its economy.

Communist-run Vietnam maintains close relations with Moscow, Washington and Beijing.

Russia has long been its top provider of military equipment, and Russian oil and gas companies operate in Vietnam's portion of the South China Sea, including in areas also claimed by China.

Rosatom, Russia's state atomic energy corporation, and Vietnam's state-owned power utility EVN agreed to boost cooperation in the nuclear sector, according to a joint document listing their signed cooperation agreements.

The content of the deal is not public.

The United States has imposed dozens of sanctions on Rosatom's subsidiaries and senior officials. The latest round of measures was announced last week by the US Department of State.

Rosatom has described US sanctions against its top officials as "unfounded and unlawful" and a "form of unfair competition from unfriendly states".

Moscow also agreed to transfer a maritime research vessel to Vietnam under a deal signed by Vietnam's Defence Ministry and Russia's Science Ministry.

"The two sides will review, discuss and find solutions to the limitations in bilateral cooperation," Vietnam's government said on its website, in reference to the deals signed on Tuesday.

Also signed on Tuesday were deals on cooperating on the digital economy and in wireless communications. - Reuters

Macquarie to invest up to US\$5b in Applied Digital data centres

SYDNEY: Australia's Macquarie will invest up to US\$5 billion (RM22.5 billion) in Applied Digital's AI data centres and will take a 15% stake in the company, the technology company said.

Providers of computing infrastructure like Applied Digital have been seeing heavy investment from companies looking to train their own AI models and get ahead of competitors.

Macquarie's asset management arm has agreed to invest up to US\$900 million in a data centre campus that Applied Digital is developing in North Dakota.

It also has the right of first refusal to invest an additional US\$4.1 billion in future company data centres for 30 months, Dallas, Texas-based Applied Digital said.

The company's chief executive, Wes Cummins, said the deal provides the company with enough equity to construct data centres with high power demands.

The new funding will be used to repay debt Applied Digital took on to build the facilities in North Dakota and will allow it to recover over US\$300 million of its equity investment in them, the firm said.

The *Wall Street Journal* was the first to report the news earlier in the day.

Applied Digital's shares have more than tripled in the past two years as investors bet on AI firms and data centre providers to bring strong levels of growth.

Microsoft said earlier this month it would invest around US\$80 billion in AI data centres in fiscal 2025 to meet growing computational needs. - Reuters



Tourists walking past shops and restaurants up the hill leading to Kiyomizu-dera Temple in the city of Kyoto. - AFP/IC

Japanese tourist magnet Kyoto to hike hotel taxes

TOKYO: Kyoto authorities announced plans to hike lodging taxes, as Japan's ancient capital seeks to assuage grumbles from locals about too many tourists.

Lured by its myriad sights and a weak yen, Japan has seen foreign tourism numbers explode in recent years, with arrivals in 2024 expected to have hit a record of more than 35 million.

But like other hotspots worldwide such as Venice in Italy or Maya Bay in Thailand, this is not universally welcome, particularly in tradition-steeped Kyoto.

The city, which is a modest bullet train ride away from Tokyo with a view of Mount Fuji on

the way - is famed for its kimono-clad *geisha* performers and Buddhist temples.

Residents have complained of disrespectful tourists harassing the *geisha* like paparazzi in their frenzy for photos, as well as causing traffic congestion and littering.

For rooms costing between ¥20,000 (RM571) and ¥50,000 per night, visitors will now see their tax double to ¥1,000 yen per person per night, under the new plans.

For accommodation over ¥100,000 per night it will soar tenfold to ¥10,000.

The new levies will take effect next year, subject to approval from the city assembly.

"We intend to hike accommodation tax to

realise 'sustainable tourism' with a high level of satisfaction for citizens, tourists and businesses," a statement said.

Tensions are highest in the Gion district, home to teahouses where *geiko* - the local name for *geisha* - and their *maiko* apprentices perform traditional dances and play instruments.

Last year, authorities moved to ban visitors from entering certain narrow private alleys in Gion after pressure from a council of local residents.

One council member told local media about an instance of a *maiko's* kimono being torn and another who had a cigarette butt put in her collar. - AFP

Nvidia faces revenue threat from chip curbs

➤ New US regulations limit exports to most countries except close allies

SAN FRANCISCO: Nvidia faces a significant revenue threat due to the latest US export restrictions on artificial intelligence chips, designed to limit the global distribution of these coveted processors, analysts and investors said.

The regulations, among the strongest yet from Joe Biden's administration, limit AI chip exports to most countries except for a select group of close US allies.

They also maintain a block on exports to some countries, including China, as the US tries to close regulatory loopholes and prevent Beijing from acquiring advanced chips that could bolster its military capabilities.

Surging demand for AI chips has catapulted Nvidia into the ranks of the world's most valuable firms, with a market value exceeding US\$3 trillion.

However, the new restrictions may complicate its ability to deliver the robust revenue growth that investors expect.

"These rules will significantly limit (Nvidia's) market since as much as half its chips currently end up in countries that will be off-limits once the rules are applied,"

said D.A. Davidson analyst Gil Luria.

Company filings show that Nvidia gets about 56% of its revenue from customers outside the US, with China making up about 17% of sales.

The export curb "threatens to derail innovation and economic growth worldwide" and would "undermine America's leadership," Nvidia vice-president of government affairs Ned Finkle said.

Finkle argued America's leading role in AI would be hurt because the rule "would impose bureaucratic control over how America's leading semiconductors, computers, systems, and even software are designed and marketed globally".

The rules were also criticised by others including the Semiconductor Industry Association, a lobbying group which said the move would force US firms to cede market share to rivals.

"By limiting access to large quantities of advanced processors, the US is effectively showing the world who's the boss. However, in doing so, it also threatens to crimp the earnings potential for many American firms such as Nvidia," said Dan Coatsworth, investment analyst at AJ Bell.

Analysts have been raising earnings estimates for Nvidia, outpacing its soaring share price growth. The forward price-to-earnings ratio is now about 31, compared to highs of over 80 in June 2023.

Under the new rules, major cloud providers such as Microsoft, Alphabet-owned Google and Amazon.com can apply for approval to bypass licensing requirements for AI chips, allowing them to establish data centers in countries affected by US chip import restrictions.

As a result, these companies, already established as AI heavyweights, are likely to increase their market share, analysts said.

"We have long viewed these companies as the gatekeepers of AI, anyway, given their financial ability to continually invest in next-gen large language models and massive installed bases," said CFRA Research analyst Angelo Zino.

"The companies that have access to the most advanced chips (in this case, the big cloud providers) will have an advantage."

Still, there are uncertainties surrounding the new rules because they are set to take effect 120 days from publication, giving the incoming Donald Trump administration time to weigh in.

While the two administrations share similar views on China's competitive threat, several analysts believe that President-elect Trump would be more willing to negotiate deals with individual companies and countries.

"He (Trump) might tinker with the list of allies on the exemption list, but overall, the move is in step with Trump's way of thinking," Coatsworth said. - Reuters

Barrick halts operations at Mali mine after gold seized

DAKAR: Canadian firm Barrick Gold said it was temporarily suspending operations at its Loulo-Gounkoto mine in Mali after the junta seized gold stocks from the site amid a months-long revenue dispute.

The west African state's military rulers have stepped up pressure on foreign firms after promising a fairer distribution of revenue from the country's lucrative mining industry.

Barrick Gold and the Malian state have been at loggerheads over the underground, open-pit Loulo-Gounkoto site in the country's west - one

of the world's largest gold complexes.

"The company remains restricted from shipping gold from the Loulo-Gounkoto mining complex," Barrick Gold said in a statement.

The company said that Malian authorities had additionally carried out an interim attachment order by moving the existing gold stock on site to a custodial bank.

"As a result, Barrick has regrettably initiated the temporary suspension of operations while it continues to work towards a resolution."

The Canadian firm owns 80% of the

Loulo-Gounkoto mine, with Mali retaining the rest.

The country's military leaders, who seized power in a 2020 coup, have been blocking shipments from the site for more than seven weeks.

Malian authorities sent a helicopter to Loulo-Gounkoto on Saturday to make the gold seizure, a security source told AFP.

It took away more than three tonnes, a source in the mining industry said on condition of anonymity. - AFP

UK inflation unexpectedly declines

LONDON: British inflation unexpectedly slowed last month and core measures of price growth - tracked by the Bank of England - fell more sharply, according to official data that will be welcomed by Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves after recent a market selloff.

The annual rate of inflation eased to 2.5% in December from 2.6% in November, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said.

Economists polled by Reuters had mostly expected a headline inflation reading of 2.6%.

The BoE - which will announce its next interest rate decision on Feb 6 - forecast in early November that inflation would be 2.5% in December.

"Policymakers and Treasury officials will be breathing a small sigh of relief," Scott Gardner, investment strategist at J.P. Morgan owned digital wealth manager Nutmeg, said.

Investors have sold British government bonds heavily in recent days, in part because they worry that inflation is likely to prove too high for the BoE to cut rates much this year, hurting economic growth and the government's stretched finances.

Core inflation, which excludes energy, food, alcohol and tobacco prices, fell to 3.2% from 3.5% in November. The Reuters poll had pointed to a smaller drop to 3.4%.

Services inflation stood at 4.4% in December - its lowest since March 2022 - compared with 5% a month earlier, the ONS said. Economists had forecast it would dip only to 4.9%.

The BoE looks at both services and core inflation as a better guide of underlying price pressures in the economy, especially those caused by persistent wage growth.

"For now, this slightly softer report should help reassure investors that the BoE can continue with its gradual easing cycle," said Luke Bartholomew, deputy chief economist at abrdn. - Reuters

Bank Indonesia delivers surprise rate cut to support growth

JAKARTA: Indonesia's central bank unexpectedly cut policy rates yesterday, resuming its monetary easing aimed at propping up economic growth despite financial market volatility that has weakened the currency.

Bank Indonesia (BI) cut the benchmark 7-day reverse repurchase rate by 25 basis points to 5.75%, its first cut since September.

All 30 economists polled by Reuters had expected no change in rates, citing the pressure on the rupiah.

The bank also trimmed its deposit facility rate and lending facility rate by 25 basis points each to 5% and 6.5%, respectively.

Governor Perry Warjiyo said the decision was in line with expectations of low inflation in 2025 and 2026 and the need to support growth.

BI cut interest rates for the first time in more than three years last September, but had then held policy steady at subsequent meetings in 2024 to anchor the rupiah, which has been under pressure amid uncertainty about US policy under Donald Trump.

The rupiah, which had traded at its weakest level since July last year ahead of the decision, extended losses to 16,320 per dollar after the rate cut.

Inflation has been moderate in Southeast Asia's largest economy, with December's annual rate of 1.57% close to the bottom end of BI's 1.5% to 3.5% target range.

BI said economic growth in 2024 may come slightly below the midpoint of its forecast range of 4.7%-5.5%. - Reuters



A visitor passing a Barrick Gold display during a convention in Toronto, Canada. - REUTERS/PIC

Starbucks reverses its 'open door' policy

➤ Visitors required to make purchase if they want to stay

NEW YORK: Starbucks has stirred the coffee pot by reversing a policy that allowed anyone to use its bathrooms, with the US public warned they will need to buy something or get out.

In a new code of conduct issued on Monday, the hot drink behemoth that boasts 29,000 retail stores in 78 markets said it wanted "to ensure our spaces are prioritised for use by our customers".

That includes the chain's cafes, patios and restrooms, according to the policy, which Starbucks noted is something most retailers enforce.

US retailers like Starbucks that bill themselves as a so-called "third space" – a gathering place outside the home or office – face a dilemma in a country where public restrooms are sparse.

The question of bathroom access has been a

fraught one for Starbucks, with the issue thrust into the spotlight in 2018 when two black men were refused access to a branch bathroom while they waited for a friend.

When they sat in the Philadelphia location's seating area without ordering, staff called the police, sparking a PR disaster.

The men were arrested but never charged.

Following the debacle, Starbucks adopted an "open bathroom" policy meaning its restrooms – at the cafes that had them – would be open to all.

But in 2022, interim chief executive Howard Schultz said the policy might have to end, owing to safety issues from people with mental health problems.

"We have to harden our stores and provide safety for our people," Schultz said at the time.

"I don't know if we can keep our bathrooms open."

In one busy Manhattan location, where the policy was not yet displayed on the door as planned, a barista who declined to be named said: "People are still gonna try and go in there – the homeless, of course – that's for sure."

The Midtown branch was equipped with a single toilet, fitted with a numerical lock, with a steady stream of people using the facility after obtaining the code from staff.

"But if people follow the rules it should be better," the barista added, suggesting the policy would make life easier for staff.

At another location a few blocks away, an employee said "it's fine" for non-paying visitors to use the restroom and the cafe seating area, apparently unaware of the new policy.

Starbucks customer Noelle Devoe speculated on X that the policy would not be used against "college kids or professionals".

"It'll just be a way for them to kick out those they feel are undesirable," she said.

Starbucks posted a 3% decline in global net revenue for the fourth quarter year-on-year, to US\$9.1 billion (RM40.9 billion), in October 2024.

The results showed that sales are continuing to fall, as the new CEO vowed a strategic overhaul to turn the company around.

The caffeinated giant claims in its corporate motto to be "nurturing the human spirit... one neighbourhood at a time" – AFP



People sitting inside of a Starbucks in New York City. – AFPIC

Canadian insurers face record costs from extreme weather

OTTAWA: Damage from extreme weather in Canada last year pushed the bill facing insurers to an unprecedented C\$8.5 billion (RM26.5 billion), the Insurance Bureau of Canada said.

Events that cause significant destruction "are escalating at a shocking rate and Canada is simply not prepared", said Celyeste Power, president of the IBC, an industry association representing Canadian insurers.

The IBC said the insured damage estimate for 2024 was 12 times higher than the annual average of C\$701 million recorded from 2001 to 2010.

"The summer of 2024 stands out as the most

destructive season in Canadian history for insured losses due to wildfires, floods and hailstorms," the group said in a statement.

In July and August alone, "four catastrophic weather events" caused more than C\$7 billion in losses, it said.

Those included a wildfire in Jasper National Park in the Canadian Rockies and flash flooding in Toronto.

Previously, the most costly year for Canadian insurers was 2016, when a massive wildfire in an Alberta oil region contributed to insured damage costs of C\$6.2 billion.

Across the world, excess heat caused by

climate change is increasing the severity of extreme weather events.

The US city of Los Angeles is currently battling deadly wildfires that have destroyed thousands of buildings and forced tens of thousands to flee their homes.

"As we watch the devastating wildfires in California where insurability of homes is at real risk, Canada's property insurers are raising the alarm that regions of Canada could potentially face similar challenges," the IBC said.

Insurance covering wildfires remains widely available in Canada, but the cost of that coverage could continue to rise, it said. – AFP

Court halts sales of 'Dubai chocolate' made outside UAE

BERLIN: A German court has banned a discount supermarket chain from selling a version of "Dubai chocolate" made outside the Emirati city, according to a ruling seen by AFP on Tuesday.

Dubai chocolate, filled with pistachio paste and thin pastry, became a viral sensation on social media platforms such as TikTok, with some videos racking up tens of millions of views.

The sought-after chocolate bars sparked mass runs on shops last year, and have resold for hundreds of euros online after selling out in stores.

The Cologne court ruling, which can be appealed, followed a complaint brought by businessman Andreas Wilmers, who imports "Dubai chocolate" from the Gulf city itself.

He complained to the court about supermarket chain Aldi Sued stocking "Alyan Dubai Handmade Chocolate", which is actually produced in Turkey.

Siding with Wilmers, the court ruled that "the average consumer would take 'Dubai Handmade Chocolate', as the phrase appears, to mean that the chocolate was manufactured in Dubai".

"The Origin: Turkey label on the reverse side is not suitable to clear up this misunderstanding", it added, pointing to its position and "small font size".

The court also ordered Aldi Sued to pay costs.

Wilmers said he was alerted to various imitation products after customers had started complaining about the taste of the treats.

"If you see 'Dubai Handmade Chocolate' on a chocolate bar that is actually mass-produced in Turkey, that is simply unacceptable", he told AFP, adding that he thinks wording such as "Dubai style" or something along those lines would be fine. – AFP

flyadeal to order Airbus A330neo jets: Source

DUBLIN: Saudi budget airline flyadeal is finalising a deal to order 10 Airbus A330neo jets in its first full-blown expansion into wide-body planes as the kingdom pursues a surge of spending on aviation, industry sources said.

The low-cost subsidiary of state carrier Saudia is likely to announce the order for the upgraded A330-900 variant in the coming weeks after comparing it with Boeing's smaller 787-9, and the first jets are expected to arrive in 2027, the sources said.

An order for 10 A330-900s would be worth some US\$1.1 billion (RM4.9 billion) after typical discounts, according to estimated delivery prices from Cirium Ascend. Airbus no longer publishes catalogue prices.

flyadeal has also negotiated purchase rights for an additional 10 A330neos, the sources said. A purchase right locks in prices without specifying delivery dates and can be held for longer than an option, which includes prices and delivery slots.

The deal comes after Reuters first reported last June that Jeddah-based flyadeal was studying an order for between 10 and 20 wide-body jets to add new destinations and carry more passengers into airport slot-constrained markets, such as Dubai.

Saudia Arabia's aviation sector is expanding as the kingdom invests billions of dollars in its Vision 2030 plan to diversify its economy away from fossil fuels. – Reuters

MARKET ROUND-UP: JANUARY 15

Bursa Trade Statistic

15 JAN 2025

Participation

Retail (19.26%)		Institution (40.88%)		Foreign (39.86%)	
Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)	
+147.93		+180.24		-328.18	
Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
667.93	520.00	1350.95	1170.71	1065.41	1393.59

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

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

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

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Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	11,951.70 -165.00
FBMKLCI	1,562.12 -14.34
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	524.19 -6.03
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	166.05 -1.01
CONSTRUCTION	287.33 -14.50
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,666.90 -95.90
ENERGY	821.79 -11.20
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	527.43 -7.08
HEALTH CARE	2,175.30 -47.10
TRANSPORTATION	1,037.82 -5.43
PROPERTY	1,071.62 -33.90
PLANTATION	7,370.01 -29.30
FBMSHA	11,829.00 -224.00
FBMACE	5,151.20 -109.00
TECHNOLOGY	59.02 -2.02

TURNOVER: 3.407 bil VALUE: RM3.084 bil

Bursa ends broadly lower as sentiment remains subdued

BURSA Malaysia reversed its early gains to close broadly lower yesterday, with over 900 stocks in the red, reflecting the continuous lack of confidence across the market.

The weaker performance was in sync with the downturn regional market performance, weighed down by cautious sentiment ahead of the release of the US consumer price index data.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI slipped 14.34 points, or 0.91%, to 1,562.12 from Tuesday's close of 1,576.46.

The benchmark index opened 5.87 points higher at 1,582.33 and rose to an intraday high of 1,586.21 in the early session before succumbing to selling pressure to hit an intraday low of 1,558.60 in late trading.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan said historically, Malaysian investors have displayed a more conservative risk appetite compared to their foreign counterparts, often avoiding equity markets during periods of heightened uncertainty.

"With persistent concerns over strong US economic data delaying policy easing and the geopolitical risks associated with a potential (Donald) Trump 2.0 administration, domestic investors are likely to remain cautious until global economic and policy conditions stabilise," he told Bernama.

Heavyweights Maybank shed six sen to RM10.14, CIMB slipped 12 sen to RM7.85, and Tenaga sank 32 sen to RM13.50, while Public Bank was flat at RM4.40 and IHH increased two sen to RM7.10.

As for the active stocks, EA Holdings was flat at half-a-sen, MYEG eased 4.5 sen to 89 sen, Gamuda fell 27 sen to RM4.45, Velesto Energy inched down half-a-sen to 16 sen, while YTL Corporation added one sen to RM2.19.

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-CWA1	0.125	-	-	1,538,856
EAH	0.005	-	-	999,118
HSI-PWB1	0.105	-0.005	-4.55	879,752
MYEG	0.890	-0.045	-4.81	870,725
GAMUDA	4.450	-0.270	-5.72	586,576
GAMUDA-C2R	0.160	-0.025	-13.51	523,248
VELESTO	0.160	-0.005	-3.03	469,261
YTL	2.190	0.010	0.46	438,734
YTLPOWR-C64	0.040	-0.005	-11.11	347,974
HSI-CWAY	0.085	-	-	310,152
NATGATE	2.300	-0.050	-2.13	299,809
VELOCITY	0.080	-	-	294,460
SNS	0.575	-0.015	-2.54	282,891
WIDAD	0.040	-0.005	-11.11	271,984
YTLPOWR	3.830	0.020	0.52	271,716
HSI-PWB4	0.065	-	-	260,336
SUNWAY	4.190	-0.060	-1.41	255,128
JCY	0.470	-0.015	-3.09	254,902
ECOWLD	1.900	-0.180	-8.65	249,602
SET	0.370	-	-	246,390



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	92.980	0.280	321
EQ8MID	1.235	0.180	8
PMETAL	4.820	0.150	68,843
PERSTIM	2.350	0.150	1,001
BIPORT	6.150	0.140	16
HLBANK	20.000	0.100	16,233
NSOP	3.980	0.100	41
RHBBANK	6.370	0.100	67,906
HSI-CWA5	0.105	0.095	6,401
SEM	2.020	0.060	2,648
HLFG	17.960	0.060	1,978
PTT	1.360	0.060	4,346
KSSC	0.850	0.055	250
DIALOG	1.890	0.050	142,971
FBMKLCI-HM8	0.095	0.050	11,826
FBMKLCI-HA6	0.490	0.045	200
FBMKLCI-HA8	0.210	0.045	2,001
CDB	3.720	0.040	22,627
CNERGEN	0.480	0.040	2,506
GENTING-HI	0.155	0.040	263

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-CWA5	0.105	950.00	6,401
SPSETIA-HD	0.050	150.00	15,800
FBMKLCI-HM8	0.095	111.11	11,826
INARI-C2W	0.010	100.00	20,100
KANGER-WB	0.010	100.00	1,562
YTLPOWR-C61	0.010	100.00	12,240
YTL-C97	0.025	66.67	12,952
FBMKLCI-HB1	0.070	55.56	60
COMPUGT	0.015	50.00	1,928
GIB-WA	0.015	50.00	2,201
JDCOM-C23	0.105	50.00	350
SIMEPROP-HA	0.060	50.00	11,030
GENTING-HI	0.155	34.78	263
99SMART-CQ	0.040	33.33	1,402
BURSA-C91	0.020	33.33	1,000
DIGISTA-WD	0.020	66.67	2,001
HANDAL-WB	0.020	33.33	14,218
PBBANK-C1J	0.020	33.33	3,501
YTLPOWR-C60	0.020	33.33	1,300
FBMKLCI-HA8	0.210	27.27	2,001

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	42,518.28	+221.16	+0.52
S&P 500 (US)	5,842.91	+6.69	+0.11
NASDAQ (US)	19,044.39	-43.71	-0.23
NYSE (US)	19,176.65	+129.32	+0.68
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	4,991.14	+10.67	+0.21
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,258.75	+57.21	+0.70
DAX (GER)	20,349.78	+78.45	+0.39
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	38,444.58	-29.72	-0.08
TOPIX (JPN)	2,690.81	+8.23	+0.31
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	19,286.07	+66.29	+0.34
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,796.03	-24.51	-0.64
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,227.12	-13.82	-0.43
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,496.81	-0.59	-0.02
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	176.48	+0.77	+0.44
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,213.27	-17.73	-0.22
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,456.83	-14.99	-0.18
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	76,583.94	+84.31	+0.11
FBM KLCI	1,560.99	-15.47	-0.98
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,767.25	-21.52	-0.57
WTI (US\$/BBL.)	77.81	+0.31	+0.40
BRENT (US\$/BBL.)	80.15	+0.23	+0.29
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,702.00	+19.70	+0.73
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	30.66	+0.31	+1.02
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	938.77	-3.45	-0.37
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	433.30	-0.95	-0.22
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,154.00	59.50	0.65
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	476.25	+1.75	+0.37
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	544.00	-2.25	-0.41
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	45.97	-0.25	-0.54
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	10,951.00	+23.00	+0.21
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	196.40	+1.30	+0.67

As at 5pm, Jan 15

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
PETDAG	18.820	-0.700	2,534
MPI	22.560	-0.660	2,308
F&N	26.200	-0.600	934
SUNMOW	1.350	-0.490	380
ALLIANZ	19.900	-0.460	782
SUNCON	3.900	-0.450	156,641
TENAGA	13.500	-0.320	99,616
UTDPLT	31.000	-0.300	2,910
VSTECs	3.450	-0.290	14,262
GAMUDA	4.450	-0.270	586,576
CARLSBG	20.080	-0.260	1,157
GAMUDA-C2F	0.685	-0.255	1,152
VITROX	3.720	-0.240	15,291
HLIND	13.180	-0.200	299
TM	6.390	-0.200	84,171
SUNWAY-PA	4.020	-0.190	1,750
ECOWLD	1.900	-0.180	248,602
PPB	12.000	-0.180	3,307
HTPADU	2.690	-0.160	7,035
IJM	2.710	-0.160	92,102

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
SUNCON-C16	0.005	-95.00	2,500
SIMEPROP-C35	0.005	-75.00	21,140
SUNWAY-C30	0.015	-72.73	31,906
MYEG-C7H	0.005	-66.67	10,440
KLK-C33	0.020	-63.64	1,050
GCB-C9	0.035	-56.25	2,406
SUNCON-C21	0.020	-55.56	5,900
SPSETIA-C88	0.030	-53.85	16,842
SUNCON-C27	0.040	-52.94	85,499
MAHSING-C63	0.085	-52.78	400
SUPERMX-C4F	0.080	-51.52	30,626
AEON-C31	0.010	-50.00	3,720
ARMADA-C91	0.010	-50.00	5,000
D&D-C11	0.005	-50.00	4,100
DAYANG-C41	0.010	-50.00	6,000
FBMKLCI-CQL	0.005	-50.00	16,500
FBMKLCI-CQ0	0.005	-50.00	10,000
FBMKLCI-CQ5	0.005	-50.00	9,250
GOCEAN-WB	0.005	-	-
HIBISCS-C66	0.005	-50.00	1,000

MARKETS/FROM THE BROKERS

SUNBIZ presents extracts of a selection of commentaries and research reports received from stockbrokers on counters that could be of interest to investors.

Compiled by SunBiz Team

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EPF's investment in MAHB to support dividend payouts

KUALA LUMPUR: The Employees Provident Fund's (EPF) investment decisions, including the trading of Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd's (MAHB) shares, align with its broader investment objectives and aim to generate the income required for dividend payments during the financial year.

In a statement, EPF said the recent decision to make a voluntary general offer for MAHB's shares at RM11 per share as part of a consortium reflects a separate, long-term strategic plan aimed at achieving sustainable growth and returns.

As an institution committed to good governance, the EPF also implements a Chinese Wall policy to ensure that its fund managers do not have access to any important non-public information such as acquisition offers that may occur.

"This policy serves as an information barrier between different departments within the EPF, preventing the disclosure of material non-public information and maintaining the integrity of its market activities," it said.

Similar to many large institutional investors with Chinese Wall policies, the EPF separates teams that handle strategic partnerships or deal with confidential transactions, while a separate team manages investments in public equities.

The policy stipulates having a strict boundary between teams that have access to material non-public information and teams that deal in the public markets.

"This ensures that decisions made by fund managers are based solely on publicly available information, avoiding any unfair advantage or insider trading. This safeguards the integrity of EPF's operations and maintains trust in its governance practices," it added. - Bernama

Ringgit advances on lower demand for US dollar

THE ringgit advanced against the US dollar at the close yesterday following reduced demand for the American dollar influenced by softer US Producer Price Index (PPI) data and expectations of a gradual tariff implementation, said an analyst.

At 6pm, the ringgit went up to 4.4970/5010 against the greenback from Tuesday's close of 4.5035/5100.

SPI Asset Management managing partner Stephen Innes said, however, forex traders remained cautious, particularly with tonight's US Consumer Price Index expected to register on the hotter side, potentially reinforcing the US dollar's strength.

"The trading community is mainly shifting into a wait-and-see mode, anticipating the specific tariff policies that President-elect Donald Trump's administration will unveil next week.

"This strategic pause reflects a broader uncertainty over the administration's forthcoming trade tactics and their potential impact on global currency dynamics," he told Bernama

At the close, the ringgit was lower against other major currencies.

It fell vis-a-vis the euro to 4.6364/6405 from Tuesday's close of 4.6201/6268, declined against the British pound to 5.4949/4998 from 5.4839/4918 on Tuesday, and fell versus the Japanese yen to 2.8656/8685 from 2.8510/8553.

The local note traded mixed against Asean currencies. It went down slightly against the Thai baht to 12.9503/12.9682 from 12.9500/9739 at the previous close but higher vis-a-vis the Indonesian rupiah at 275.4/275.8 from 276.7/277.3 on Tuesday.

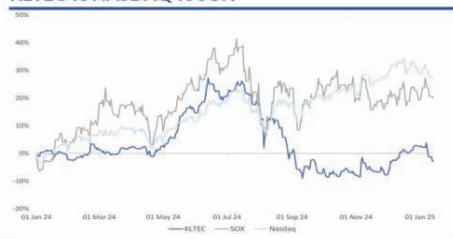
The ringgit also depreciated against the Singapore dollar to 3.2909/2943 from 3.2889/2939 and was higher against the Philippine peso at 7.677/68 from 7.68/7.70.

Exchange Rates			
FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5680	4.4310	4.4210
1 Australian Dollar	2.8430	2.7260	2.7100
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3410	3.2410	3.2330
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1790	3.0920	3.0800
1 Euro	4.7130	4.5580	4.5380
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5690	2.4730	2.4570
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3410	3.2410	3.2330
1 Sterling Pound	5.5840	5.4020	5.3820
1 Swiss Franc	5.0400	4.8250	4.8100
100 UAE Dirham	125.8300	119.2600	119.0600
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.8150	3.5720	3.3720
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.7400	60.0600	N/A
100 Danish Krone	64.7500	59.5600	59.3600
100 Hongkong Dollar	59.3000	56.3200	56.1200
100 Indian Rupee	5.3700	5.0400	4.8400
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0291	0.0263	0.0213
100 Japanese Yen	2.8980	2.8030	2.7930
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.2400	37.8900	37.6900
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6700	1.5600	1.3600
100 Philippine Peso	7.9000	7.4400	7.2400
100 Qatar Riyal	126.7100	120.2800	120.0800
100 Saudi Riyal	123.0300	116.7900	116.5900
100 South Africa Rand	25.0500	22.6000	22.4000
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5900	1.4600	1.2600
100 Swedish Krona	42.1600	38.3600	38.1600
100 Thai Baht	13.7500	12.1900	11.7900

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

Technology Overweight

KLTEC vs NASDAQ vs SOX



Source: Company data, RHB

SEMICONDUCTOR Industry Association (SIA) lifted its world semiconductor sales forecasts for the third time in a row, now expecting 19% YoY growth (to US\$626.9 billion) in 2024 and a 11.2% YoY spike this year. A broad-based recovery is expected in 2025, with growth from all segments. Early recovery indications in the automated test equipment (ATE) space and traction in the front-end semiconductor space bolster our expectations of a sustained sector recovery, supported by technology advancements and the replacement cycle. SEMI expects test, assembly & packaging equipment sales to grow by 7.4% and 10% in 2024 and to further accelerate in 2025.

The sector is under-owned after the steep sell-down since 2H'24. And is likely to return to an accumulation mode, supported by attractive valuations vs an expectation of a broad-based pick-up in FY25 - fuelled by the recovery in demand and favourable FX movements. The tone of technology companies' management teams point to shorter earnings visibility, but we expect to see stronger orders going into FY25, coupled with some urgent orders. Various new opportunities and clientele gained from likely circumstances related to the potential tariff hike, as well as the China Plus One and Taiwan Plus One strategies, are among the positives.

The diverging of the PHLX Semiconductor Index's (SOX) and KLTEC's performances imply that the KLTEC has more legs to catch up - judging from the SOX's earnings growth expectation (FY25F: 34%) and the correlation of these indices. The start of the US Federal Funds Rate cut should benefit the valuations of high-growth sectors like technology. Meanwhile, the potential curbing of artificial intelligence (AI)-related chip exports may directly affect only a few local names in the supply chains of GPU and CPU servers.

- RHB Research, Jan 15

AGX Group Bhd Buy. Target price: RM0.84



Source: Bloomberg

MANAGEMENT expressed strong confidence in the 2025 outlook, driven by positive prospects of its aerospace segment and All-Link. The aerospace segment is expected to see strong revenue growth, thanks to a newly secured Philippines customer and the recent expansion of hangar capacity at Asia Digital Engineering (ADE; the Capital A MRO arm). AGX has been handling the trial shipment for this new Philippines customer and will officially handle their logistics starting in 2025. Furthermore, management is seeing a significant increase in aircraft maintenance volume for ADE following the operation of the new 14-line hangar in Sept 24.

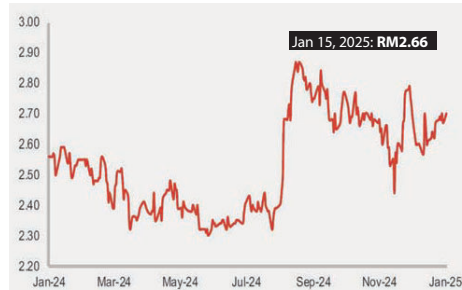
ADE's CEO, Mahesh Kumar, is optimistic about doubling revenue in 2025, pointing out that the new hangar is fully booked for 2025, further validating its outlook. AGX has the competitive edge as the preferred logistics provider handling the bulk of ADE's volume. Additionally, with the major customer secured in 2024, All-Link benefits from the global e-commerce boom.

AGX is actively pursuing a few major airlines' customers in Malaysia and globally. AGX is looking to secure a significant MRO logistic contract with a major local airline company. We understand that this airline's potential aircraft maintenance volume could be comparable to that of the current volume by ADE. Given that AGX already provides aircraft-on-ground (AOG) services for this airline, we see a strong likelihood of securing the contract. With the intensifying global trade tension, we believe AGX, through its partnership with All-Link, will benefit from ongoing global trade diversification, leading to higher shipment volume.

We like AGX for its niche exposure in the aerospace business, riding on ADE's ambitious growth prospects, and benefiting from global trade tension.

BUY with RM0.84 TP. - Philip Capital Research, Jan 15

Yinson Holdings Bhd Outperform. Target price: RM3.87



Source: Kenanga Research

YINSON Production Offshore Holdings Ltd (YPOHL), a subsidiary of Yinson, announced a US\$1 billion redeemable convertible preference share (RCPS) and warrant issuance (with an option to increase to US\$1.5 billion). Key investors include Platinum Lily (Abu Dhabi Investment Authority), British Columbia Investment Management Corporation, and RRJ Capital. Subject to shareholders' approval, the deal is set to be completed by the end of Q1'25. Proceeds will be allocated as follows: US\$200 million for share buybacks and green technology investments, US\$700 million for new FPSO and expansion capex, and US\$100 million for general corporate purposes.

The issuer's redemption of RCPS is subject to a 15.75% IRR and a 3-year make-whole period. Holders can convert RCPS into FPSO business shares upon a qualified IPO (within the next 3-5 years), enabling participation in the FPSO business's upside. If US\$1 billion is subscribed, RCPS holders would own 24.5% of the FPSO business equity.

This deal values YPOHL's FPSO business at an EV/EBITDA multiple of 8.5x (including FPSO Agogo's valuation, and as similarly implied by our SoP valuation), higher than the peer average of 6.5x, reflecting investor confidence in Yinson's FPSO expertise and potential future wins. The announced deal values the FPSO business at a post-money valuation of US\$3.7 billion (after injection of the US\$1 billion proceeds from the RCPS) in total and YINSON is expected to own 71.9% of the enlarged company (post IPO if it materialises).

OUTPERFORM with RM3.87 TP. - Kenanga Research, Jan 15



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CNY *decor* essentials

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PEXELS/PIC



Bright red lanterns light the way for happiness and good luck.



Red packets filled with money symbolise goodwill.

Bringing prosperity to life

➤ Welcoming CNY with meaningful decorations steeped in rich history

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

CHINESE New Year (CNY) is a celebration of vibrant colours and symbolic traditions. Central to the festivities are the decorations that adorn homes and public spaces, each carrying deep cultural meaning. These adornments set the tone for an auspicious year ahead.

Chinese lanterns
 No CNY is complete without the soft glow of lanterns. These bright red ornaments are often seen hanging in rows along streets, outside homes or in temples. The lanterns' shape and design vary, but their purpose remains the same: to light the way for good luck and happiness.



Paper cuttings
 Paper cuttings are among the most recognisable decorations during CNY. Made from vivid red paper, they symbolise joy and prosperity. These delicate designs often feature motifs such as zodiac animals, dragons and the character *Fu* (good luck). Displayed on windows or doors, the cuttings are illuminated by sunlight, showcasing their intricate craftsmanship. Beyond aesthetics, these decorations are believed to ward off evil spirits and welcome blessings. Crafting

masterpieces is an art form in itself, often passed down through generations. The act of creating them is also a gesture of inviting fortune into one's life, making the process as meaningful as the outcome.

Red packets
 Although not a traditional decoration, red packets are a part of the CNY aesthetic. These small envelopes, filled with money, are given to children, unmarried adults and employees as a gesture of goodwill. The packets are often adorned with gold lettering or intricate designs, tying them to the broader theme of abundance and joy. Even when not distributed, red packets are sometimes displayed as part of home decorations, contributing to the festive atmosphere with their vibrant colours and auspicious motifs.

Lucky plants
 Kumquat trees are a staple decoration during CNY, symbolising wealth and abundance. Their small golden fruits are a visual metaphor for gold coins, making them a popular choice for those wishing to attract financial success. Mandarin orange plants are another favourite. They are often exchanged as gifts to spread goodwill among family and friends. Lucky bamboo is another cherished plant, with its layered stalks representing elements of balance, harmony and growth. These greenery-based displays are a way of connecting with nature while embracing the hopes for a fruitful year.

Door couplets
 The tradition of hanging red couplets on door frames is one of the oldest

customs associated with CNY. These vertical strips of red paper are inscribed with poetic verses in elegant calligraphy, expressing wishes for prosperity, happiness and longevity. Typically placed in pairs to signify balance, the couplets are not just decorative but deeply meaningful, embodying hopes for a harmonious and auspicious year. The use of red ink and gold lettering is intentional as both colours are symbolic of prosperity. These couplets are replaced annually to ensure fresh blessings for the coming year.

Blooming flowers
 Flowers are a powerful symbol of new beginnings in Chinese culture, making them an essential part of CNY decor. Each bloom has its own meaning. Plum blossoms, with their hardy strength in winter, represent perseverance and hope. Orchids symbolise fertility and refinement while the vibrant peony, often called the "king of flowers," is associated with wealth and honour. These floral arrangements are carefully selected to reflect



Blooming flowers signify growth and prosperity.
 - PICS FROM PINTEREST



Red poetic banners express wishes for happiness and success.

the family's aspirations for the coming year. Kumquat trees, in particular, are a popular choice as their golden fruit resembles small gold coins, signifying prosperity and wealth. The cheerful display of flowers and plants transforms homes into spaces filled with life and positivity.

Modern decorations
 While traditional decorations remain at the heart of CNY, contemporary twists have also found their way into the celebrations. LED lanterns, modern floral arrangements and customised couplets add a fresh flair to age-old practices, reflecting the evolving nature of the festival.

Regardless of style, the essence of CNY decorations remains the same, which is to create a warm, welcoming environment that reflects hope and a shared desire for a prosperous future. As the world celebrates CNY, these vibrant decorations remind us of the enduring power of tradition to bring people together in joy.



Lucky plants represent wealth and harmony. - FREEPIK



Skogsduva duvet cover and pillow.



Torfast storage combination.

Skogsduva bumblebee soft toy.



Vallaby rug.

Sleep right, grow well

Designing slumber-friendly spaces for kids

THERE are many things a child needs for their development and growth – food, healthcare, shelter, emotional security and positive reinforcement. Routines are also important. Studies have shown children with regular routines are better equipped to identify and regulate their feelings as well as adapt to new challenges and stressors.

For kids, a vital part of a proper routine is ensuring they have sufficient sleep.

Importance of sleep

According to paediatrician Dr Ng Kexin, sleep is far more than just downtime – it is a critical activity that supports brain development.

“Toddlers require 12–14 hours of sleep a day while school-aged children need 9–12 hours. Children who consistently get enough sleep tend to be healthier and more energetic. They are more likely to be cooperative, cheerful and responsive, leading to better parent-child relationship. They are better able to focus, which supports academic performance. Sleep also enhances memory, learning, emotional regulation and physical growth.”

Yet, sleep is an increasing concern for Malaysians. A study by the *Asian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences* revealed nine out of 10 Malaysians experience insomnia.

Another study on World Sleep Trends in 2023 found Malaysia was among the top 10 countries with the lowest proportion of people getting recommended amounts of sleep (53.79%) as well as the fewest number of long sleepers (2.97%).

Additionally, according to the 2023 Ikea Life at Home Report, more than one-third of Malaysians find sleep key to maintaining a sense of mental well-being at home.

Space for healthy sleep

A common challenge parents face is their children's inability to fall asleep easily. This could be attributed to packed school schedules and extracurricular activities as well as excessive screen time due to access to electronics such as phones and tablets.

However, one critical factor that is often overlooked is the sleeping environment.

Malaysian homes face unique challenges. Multi-generational households and families in urban apartments with limited space can make it difficult to design restful environments for children. Additionally, with a significant portion of Malaysians today (78%) residing in cities, the constant stimulation and non-stop activity of urban life can make it difficult for children to unwind and prepare for sleep.

Having a space that caters to children's needs for play and rest while bringing a sense of independence and excitement can make a difference in their



Upplyst LED wall lamp.

development and well-being.

“A well-thought-out bedroom can significantly improve a child's sleep quality. This is especially important for children learning to sleep independently as they need to feel safe and comfortable enough to self-soothe themselves back to sleep if they wake up during the night. A thoughtfully designed space should adapt to a child's evolving needs, fostering healthy sleep patterns while doubling as a space for creativity and play,” said Ng.

Practical solutions for sleep-friendly spaces

Guided by its philosophy of democratic design and creating solutions that meet all five dimensions of design, form, function, low price, sustainability and quality, Ikea seeks to offer accessible ways for parents to help their children achieve

quality sleep.

For families navigating small spaces, multifunctional furniture such as extendable beds and mattresses or beds with integrated drawers offer form and functionality. A loft bed, for example, is a practical solution to optimise space while allowing extra floor area for activities such as studying or playtime.

“Just as a cluttered bedroom can stress adults, it can also distract children. A clean and organised room not only fosters a calm and relaxing atmosphere but also reduces distraction, preparing children for a restful night. Incorporating tidying into

bedtime routines can signal to children that it is time to wind down,” said Ng.

Additionally, parents can minimise noise from traffic or construction that might disrupt their child's sleep. Soft furnishings such as rugs or sound-absorbing panels can help soften and reduce unwanted noise – and make a room more inviting.

Inspiring rest and play

To further enhance the environment, parents can also consider and optimise other key elements within the home to create a fun, safe and sleep-friendly space for their children:

☑ Comfort

Prioritise child-friendly, cosy mattresses and bedding. The right pillow or mattress support can make all the difference in ensuring sound sleep. Soft toys can also be

comforting and provide a sense of security, making bedtime more inviting and helping children transition smoothly from play to restful sleep.

☑ Light

Bright, harsh lighting reduces melatonin and makes it harder for kids to fall asleep. Opt for blackout curtains to block outside distractions and warm, dimmable lights or bedside lamps to help wind down and signal bedtime.

☑ Temperature

Lightweight, breathable bedding materials can help children sleep comfortably in Malaysia's warm, humid climate.

☑ Air

Pet fur, pollen, dust and other allergens can heavily affect sleep quality, not to mention health. Investing in an air purifier can help maintain clean, fresh air in the children's bedrooms and ease their sleep.

Sleep as everyday wellness

Children today are growing up in a digitally connected world but their fundamental need for connection, creativity and nurturing spaces remains unchanged.

Creating sleep-friendly spaces is about creating an environment where children feel safe, supported and ready to grow. Parents have the power to shape these spaces to inspire rest and play. They can lead by example, making sleep and rest a shared priority.

This article is contributed by Ikea sales leader Srihawa Samsuri.



Flat-screen butlers

➤ AI turns TVs into omnipresent home assistants

TV manufacturers such as LG, Samsung and TCL are packing ever more artificial intelligence (AI) technology into stunning, huge screens that are inching towards being digital assistants capable of chatting with users and other devices in homes, some with the help of Google or Microsoft.

South Korea-based LG touted the arrival of “affectionate intelligence” in which home appliances watch over people — from tracking how well they sleep to making sure they remember to take an umbrella when rain is in the forecast.

“At LG, we are seamlessly integrating AI into physical living spaces around us. We see space not merely as a physical location but as an environment where holistic experiences come to life — across the home, mobility, commercial and even virtual spaces,” said LG CEO William Cho.

LG is making advances with its digital assistant that employs generative AI and sensors in devices to understand what people are doing and coordinate devices in responses tailored to the context, according to the company.

LG announced a partnership with Microsoft to put Copilot AI to use in its consumer electronics.

“We are joining forces to shape the future of AI-powered spaces. Our ultimate goal is simple yet profound — to leverage AI as a means of creating holistic customer value in whatever space you are,” Cho said of LG and Microsoft.

LG and Microsoft are working on AI “agents” for homes, cars, hotels and other “spaces” and plan to develop some that not only understand and interact with customers but also predict their needs, according to

the companies.

“At Microsoft, we believe AI will fundamentally change the way we live and work. We could not be more excited to partner with LG Electronics, the pioneer of smart, connected spaces, to integrate AI into life’s everyday experiences,” Microsoft chief commercial officer Judson Althoff said in a video appearance at an LG press event.

Cho stressed LG’s plan for connected homes governed by AI would be an open model, meaning devices from other manufacturers can be designed to sync with the network.

TCL teams up with Google

Chinese TV titan TCL announced a new QM6K line of premium TVs starting at US\$800 (RM3,601), along with a partnership with Google to build the internet giant’s Gemini AI into some models.

“TV is already well positioned as a hub for entertainment and information. With the Gemini model and new hardware capabilities such as the proximity sensor and the far field microphones, we will be able to unlock whole new use cases that will evolve how you interact with your TV,” Google (TV platforms) vice president Shalini Govil-Pai said during a TCL media event.

Govil-Pai described Gemini-enhanced TVs as hubs for knowledge and managing connected devices in homes.

“Your Google TV will always be ready to help when you need it. Our upgraded voice assistant with Gemini capabilities can understand natural language,” she said.

Gemini features will start rolling out later this year to Google TV devices and some TCL models, according to Govil-Pai.

China-based consumer electronics



Consumers will not only have an AI system that understands and interacts with them, but it will also predict their needs.

colossus Hisense announced it is working Google Home software into its line-up of products to enable “true home automation”.

Samsung Electronics, meanwhile, unveiled its “AI for All” roadmap aimed at making AI an “every day,

everywhere” experience.

Samsung executives said its devices from sensor-packed wearables to televisions were increasing intuitive and collaborative interactions with the help of AI.

“It is the age of Home AI. We have

brought intelligent, powerful and personalised experiences leveraging every breakthrough advancement we can dream up to make AI work for you,” said Samsung Electronics America Connected Experience Centre head Jonathan Gabrio. — AFP



Mountain biking is a hardcore workout that will build muscles. — ALL PICS BY PEXELS

Pedal for your dream body

IS your interest piqued by the sight of vehicles with mountain bikes hoisted on their roofs? Or seeing convoys of brightly attired cyclists enjoying a morning cuppa post-ride?

Mountain biking is a hobby many Malaysians are taking up as evidenced by the proliferation of biking clubs as well as specialist shops. Here are several benefits of pursuing this rigorous exercise routine.

Great workout

Make no mistake, mountain biking is a hardcore workout. The very nature of mountain biking requires you to tackle challenging terrain, often involving uphill rides.

There will be moments when you must sprint. Major muscle groups such as hamstrings, calves and quadriceps are called into action, requiring the heart to pump more oxygenated blood.

Toning those muscles

Want a fit and toned-looking physique? Mountain bikers utilise every muscle in their body. Riding over rough terrain will require plenty of upper body strength, which builds strong arms.

Abdominal muscles are strengthened as you maintain balance when negotiating tricky terrain. The pedal motion tones quads, glutes, calves and hamstrings, giving you a holistic workout.

Less stressful on joints

Make no mistake, mountain biking is a strenuous sport. But compared with hiking, jogging or even walking, being on a mountain bike places a lot less stress on the joints, especially at the knees and hips.

It is the suspension of the bike that will absorb most of the impact, allowing you to enjoy a good workout without stressing your joints too much. — by **R.BALA**

■ BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

theSun welcomes Snake Year with Tiger Beer

► Festive celebration of unity, prosperity

THE office of theSun was abuzz with festive cheer as Tiger Beer joined the team to celebrate and usher in the Year of the Snake. The event, centred on Tiger Beer's Chinese New Year (CNY) campaign "Together We Roar", highlighted the partnership between theSun and Heineken Malaysia Bhd while inspiring everyone to embrace boldness, unity and prosperity.

This year, Heineken Malaysia sought to connect communities through on-ground activations, collaborations and festive traditions. As part of its annual custom, Heineken Malaysia managing director Martijn Van Keulen led its management team on a visit to theSun office in Petaling Jaya.

theSun's printing factory came alive with lion and tiger dance performances, featuring vibrant colours and spirited movements. The lions brought blessings of fortune and prosperity to staff present, a tradition deeply rooted in Chinese culture, conveying the warding off of negative energies and the welcoming of good luck.

The celebrations began with the exchange of tokens of appreciation between Van Keulen and theSun executive director Adam Ong, symbolising the strength of their collaboration and shared successes over the years.

A memorable highlight was the lively toast of beers. Both teams raised their bottles to courage, growth and a prosperous year ahead, setting the tone for the joyful festivities that followed. Leaders and attendees also gathered for the yee sang tossing ceremony, with cheers ringing across the factory.

Tiger Beer also organised an engaging activity for theSun's employees. Participants enjoyed themselves and walked away with delightful gifts, making the celebration memorable.

As both teams bid farewell to the past year and embraced the new one, the celebration underscored the shared value of progress. Together, they roared louder, bolder and stronger into the Year of the Snake.



theSun and Heineken Malaysia come together for a group photo to celebrate the occasion. — PICS BY AMIRUL SHAFIQ/THE SUN



Ong (left) and Van Keulen exchange tokens to celebrate a strong partnership.



Leaders tossing yee sang together, symbolising hopes for prosperity and unity.

Why invest in compact discs now?

■ BY R. BALA

TO many Gen Alphas, the notion of buying, owning and listening to tunes on compact discs seem as archaic as spinning shellac discs on a gramophone. However, there are a plethora of compelling reasons to invest in those shiny silver discs once again.

Availability

Unlike vinyl releases, most, if not all, recording artists put out their work on CD. It is readily and abundantly available. It may not be as convenient as a click on a streaming app but most CD releases can be found online, if not at a physical store. The K-pop boom has also fuelled the demand for tangible media as many of the artists in the genre release multiple versions of their EPs or albums on CD.

Superior audio quality

Streaming may be de rigueur these days but there is a huge compromise in sound performance. There is a definite jump in audio quality when listening to uncompressed files on CD. Even with major streaming platforms such as Tidal and Apple Music

promising "Hi-Fi" quality, most listeners will not have the equipment to properly squeeze every last drop of audiophile fun from them. CDs though allow listeners to enjoy superior music delivery even with relatively modest set ups.

Robust and long-lasting

Ok, the myth that came with the advent of CDs that they will never deteriorate has well and truly busted. They are susceptible to mold, spotting and scratched over time. However compared with the other physical option – vinyl, it does seem a lot more robust and will stand up to some rough handling, something which records will not. It is also definitely a step up from cassette tapes that generally do not last a long time.

Aesthetically pleasing

Just like a well-appointed book shelf, a carefully curated collection of CDs gives the space a sense of the person's personality and identity. It is hugely personal and says volumes about that individual's tastes and preferences. Given the size of the format, these can be stored neatly and need not take up a lot of space.



Limited edition CD box sets are highly collectible. — R. BALA/THE SUN

Cheap and cheerful

The great thing about the streaming revolution is that a lot of pre-loved CDs are available at bazaars, thrift stores and music emporiums at very decent prices. A quick trawl through the many vendors at the weekend bazaar at Petaling Jaya's Amcorp Mall will show pre-loved CDs going for as low as RM5 to a more median range of RM25–RM30 for popular titles. There is also the added thrill of finding that long sought after album snuggled hidden and almost forgotten in the corner of a bargain bin, just waiting to be taken to

a loving home.

Collectibility factor

While CDs do not yet have vinyl's hip cache, the time will surely come for the format to become fashionable again. While the bog-standard releases are relatively cheap, this cannot be said for the limited edition specimens. Box sets, Japanese editions with the unique Obi strips and rare "pressings" not only hold their value but are steadily climbing upwards. A good example would be Pink Floyd's *Immersion* series of CD box sets, which cost RM350 on original



It is a good time to start a CD collection as prices are low, especially used items. — PEXELSPIC

release in 2011, but are now commanding double that in the secondary market.

Do not wait until prices start getting ridiculous. Invest in a CD collection (and a player) now to fill your home with quality music and no small amount of style.



Rock legend to perform live

➤ Former Beyond drummer Yip Sai Wing brings You & Me Concert Tour to Malaysia

LEGENDARY drummer and co-founder of rock band Beyond, Yip Sai Wing is bringing his You & Me Concert Tour to Arena of Stars, Resorts World Genting on March 22.

As a founding member of Beyond, Yip helped craft some of the most unforgettable classics in rock history, including *Boundless Oceans, Vast Skies, Glorious Years, Truly Love You* and *Like You*. After embarking on a solo career in 2001, Yip has continued to captivate audiences with his music, performing in different countries for over two decades.

The You & Me Concert Tour promises to be an unforgettable night filled with nostalgia and inspiration. Yip will perform the tour's theme song *You & Me* along with a selection of timeless Beyond hits and his own personal works.

Speaking on the theme of the tour, Yip shared his reflections on a post-pandemic world: "There are countless connections between people. Only through mutual care can we overcome difficulties together."

With this message, he expressed hopes to use the power of music to bring people together, spread positivity and inspire unity.

Adding to the excitement of the evening is the inclusion of special guest Gao Jin, a renowned singer for his hits *My Good Brother* and *There Are Too Many People* as well as the composer of the iconic song *We Are Different*.

Rising to fame in 2006 with his viral hit *Tears Flow Listening to Love Songs*, Gao won the Sprite Music Chart's Best New Artiste of the Year award in 2007.

Over the past decade, he has released over 20 albums and EPs. His heartfelt music and compelling performances are sure to make this concert a memorable experience for fans. This concert is also a celebration of Beyond's extraordinary 40-year legacy and Yip's and Gao's individual music journeys.

Fans can expect a powerful retrospective that revisits youthful dreams and celebrates decades of music that have shaped and inspired multiple generations.

"YOU & ME"
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CONCERT TOUR - MALAYSIA

22.03.2025

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MAIN ARTISTE:
YIP SAI WING
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GUEST ARTISTE:
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Tickets for the show will go on sale tomorrow.



Markle's latest foray into streaming content will feature tips on cooking, gardening, crafting, flower arranging and hosting. — AFP/IC

Meghan Markle's Netflix show delayed due to LA fires

A new Netflix series, starring Meghan Markle, has been delayed due to the devastating Los Angeles wildfires, the Duchess of Sussex revealed last Sunday.

With Love, Meghan, an eight-episode lifestyle and cooking show, had been due to debut on the streaming platform yesterday.

But with blazes that have killed at least 16 individuals still burning across Los Angeles and thousands of homes destroyed, it has been pushed back to March.

"I am thankful to my partners at Netflix for supporting me in delaying the launch as we focus on the needs of those impacted by the wildfires in my home state of California," Markle said in a statement.

Markle, who was born in Los Angeles, lives with Harry in Montecito, a swanky coastal enclave some 160km northwest of the city.

A Netflix statement called the show a heartfelt tribute to the beauty of Southern California.

The streaming giant said the delay was made at the request of Markle and with the full support of Netflix due to the ongoing devastation caused by the wildfires.

Last week, Harry and Markle were seen in the Los Angeles suburb of Pasadena, comforting survivors of the fire.

They also issued a statement urging Californians to open their homes to evacuees.

"If a friend, loved one or pet has to evacuate and you are able to offer them a safe haven in your home, please do," said a statement posted to their official website.

A publicist did not respond to a media request for comment on whether the couple had personally hosted any evacuees.

But, a report in Britain's *Telegraph* said they were sheltering friends and loved ones who have been displaced by the wildfires.

The pair had also donated clothing, children's items and other essential supplies, it said.

A trailer for *With Love, Meghan* previewed the *Suits* star sharing tips on cooking, gardening, crafting, flower arranging and hosting.

Guests will include celebrated chef Alice Waters, actress Mindy Kaling and close friend Abigail Spencer, one of Markle's *Suits* co-stars. Harry appears briefly in the trailer.

Since stepping away from their official royal duties in early 2020, Prince Harry and Markle have been cut off from the royal purse, forcing them to develop their own sources of income.

Their partnership with Netflix yielded the much-talked-about *Harry & Meghan*, a six-episode docuseries launched in December 2022.

In March 2024, Markle launched the lifestyle brand American Riviera Orchard. — AFP



Djokovic flattens Faria in second round

NOVAK DJOKOVIC continued to build into the Australian Open with a 6-1, 6-7(4), 6-3, 6-2 victory over Portuguese qualifier Jaime Faria in the second round on Wednesday, taking another step towards a 25th Grand Slam title.

For the top players, the first week of a major is all about finding a groove in the full heat of competition and Djokovic could not have wished for more from his first two opponents, both making their Grand Slam debuts.

On Monday, inspired American teenager Nishesh Basavareddy gave the 10-times Melbourne Park champion the runaround for

the first hour of their first-round clash, and 21-year-old Faria presented another set of problems for Djokovic to solve.

Faria's victory in the opening round was his first at tour level, while Djokovic moved out of a tie with Roger Federer to claim another record merely by taking to the court for his 430th Grand Slam match.

Gap in experience looked like a chasm in a one-sided opening set but Faria stormed back into the contest by winning the second set in a tiebreaker on the back of some fine ball-striking and all-court athleticism.

Djokovic, with one-time adversary Andy Murray again in his coaching box, broke for 4-

2 in the third set, however, and fully quashed the threat offered by the world number 125 in the fourth to set up a meeting with Czech Tomas Machac.

"I love this court, I love competition," the 37-year-old Serbian said after reaching the third round of the Australian Open for the 17th time with his 14th ace of the match.

"I think I responded well in the third set and particularly the fourth. He was playing lights-out tennis at the end of the second set and start of the third and I had to weather the storm."

"I told him at the net, 'the future is bright for you so carry on.'" — Reuters

Osaka delights in revenge over Muchova

NAOMI OSAKA said she was enjoying a little bit of revenge against Karolina Muchova at the Australian Open on Wednesday, recalling how the Czech had ended her US Open campaign last year when she was sporting her "best outfit ever".

Osaka, who fought back from a set down to beat the 20th seed 1-6, 6-1, 6-3 and reach the third round at Melbourne Park, turned heads at Flushing Meadows last August with a tennis dress featuring tiered ruffles and a giant white bow.

She only got to wear it as far as the second round in New York, however.

"She crushed me at the US Open when I had my best outfit ever," four-times Grand Slam champion Osaka said as spectators at the Kia Arena burst into laughter.

"I was so disappointed. I was so mad, but this was my little revenge. It's not a bad thing, revenge is competitive. But yeah, it means a lot. She's one of the toughest

opponents out there." Up next for Osaka is Swiss Belinda Bencic, who returned to the tour late last year after giving birth to her daughter.

Osaka made her own comeback 12 months ago after a maternity break during which she had a daughter. Tokyo Olympics champion Bencic leads the pair's head-to-head record 3-2 but Osaka won their last meeting in the semifinals of Miami three years ago where the Japanese player lost in the final.

"I know she's an incredibly tough player. She fights a lot," added Osaka, who is looking to win her first title since a 2021 triumph at Melbourne Park.

"I don't want to say I've grown up with her, but we've definitely seen each other on tour. It's really cool that she also had a baby and she came back as well."

"She seems to be doing really good. So yeah, I think it's going to be fun." — Reuters



Zheng stunned in Melbourne

... as Sabalenka defies serve struggles to stay alive at AO

ZHENG QINWEN was the first big name to exit the women's draw at the Australian Open on Wednesday after the Olympic champion was stunned by Laura Siegemund while top seed Aryna Sabalenka made heavy weather of her second-round match before going through.

China's Zheng had been bidding to emulate compatriot Li Na's 2014 triumph at Melbourne Park but her hopes evaporated on John Cain Arena where unseeded German Siegemund pulled off a stunning 7-6(3), 6-3 victory.

The fifth seed left the court looking like she was about to burst into tears while world No. 97 Siegemund was beaming from ear to ear after a famous win.

"I knew I just had to play more with my best tennis - you have nothing to lose so I told myself to swing free," Siegemund said on court.

"She's an amazing player, she's one of the best players now. But I know I can play and I wanted to make it a tough fight," Zheng said it was just not her day.

"I had a lot of chances to break her in the first set but you know in that moment maybe my concentration wasn't there," added the 22-year-old. "At the same time, I felt she was playing really good. It's tennis, nothing more."

Meanwhile, Sabalenka is bidding to become the first woman to claim three straight titles at Melbourne Park since

Martina Hingis from 1997-99 and while the Belarusian beat Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-3, 7-5, it was far from smooth sailing. After easing through the first two games on Rod Laver Arena, Sabalenka twice swapped breaks with the world No. 54, before taking complete control for a 5-2 lead and closing out the opening set on serve.

The three-times Grand Slam champion's serve came under intense pressure in the next set and she found herself trailing 4-1 as an inspired Bouzas Maneiro began hitting stinging winners on both sides of the court.

Sabalenka found a spark from somewhere and fought back from 5-2 to level at 5-5 and fired a backhand winner to break again in the next game before wrapping up the contest to extend her win streak at the hardcourt major to 16.

"She played incredible tennis today and it was a really tough one," Sabalenka said.

"In the second set ... I wasn't rushing too much after 5-2, I was like, 'okay, whatever, we just leave this second set and we move on. And yeah, I was able to turn it around."

"I'm super happy with the win in straight sets, especially against someone like her, who makes you work for every point." American seventh seed Jessica Pegula defeated Belgian Elise Mertens 6-4, 6-2 on Margaret Court Arena, while Bencic beat Olga Danilovic 7-6(3) and Suzan Lamens 6-1, 7-6(3) and Slava Danilovic stunned 25th seed Ludmila Samsonova 6-1, 6-2. — Reuters

322 Notices

PROCLAMATION OF SALE
IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT KUALA LUMPUR
EXECUTION NO.: WA-38-2288-08/2024

PUBLIC AUCTION
ON WEDNESDAY, THE 05TH FEBRUARY 2025 AT 09:00 AM
ELECTRONICALLY ON THE E-LEADING WEBSITE: e-LEADING OPERATION CENTER
KUANJIAN COURT COMPLEX, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR
Please visit <https://eleading.hakaim.gov.my/bidderweb>

WILL SELL

RESERVED PRICE RM 750,000.00

PLAINTIFF: AMBANK (M) BERHAD
DEFENDANT: LEW LUY YEN
TITLE NO./LOT NO.: 50/204, 50/205, 50/206, 50/207, 50/208, 50/209, 50/210, 50/211, 50/212, 50/213, 50/214, 50/215, 50/216, 50/217, 50/218, 50/219, 50/220, 50/221, 50/222, 50/223, 50/224, 50/225, 50/226, 50/227, 50/228, 50/229, 50/230, 50/231, 50/232, 50/233, 50/234, 50/235, 50/236, 50/237, 50/238, 50/239, 50/240, 50/241, 50/242, 50/243, 50/244, 50/245, 50/246, 50/247, 50/248, 50/249, 50/250, 50/251, 50/252, 50/253, 50/254, 50/255, 50/256, 50/257, 50/258, 50/259, 50/260, 50/261, 50/262, 50/263, 50/264, 50/265, 50/266, 50/267, 50/268, 50/269, 50/270, 50/271, 50/272, 50/273, 50/274, 50/275, 50/276, 50/277, 50/278, 50/279, 50/280, 50/281, 50/282, 50/283, 50/284, 50/285, 50/286, 50/287, 50/288, 50/289, 50/290, 50/291, 50/292, 50/293, 50/294, 50/295, 50/296, 50/297, 50/298, 50/299, 50/300, 50/301, 50/302, 50/303, 50/304, 50/305, 50/306, 50/307, 50/308, 50/309, 50/310, 50/311, 50/312, 50/313, 50/314, 50/315, 50/316, 50/317, 50/318, 50/319, 50/320, 50/321, 50/322, 50/323, 50/324, 50/325, 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SIDENETTING

Orient stun Derby to earn lucrative City tie

LEYTON ORIENT will face Manchester City in the FA Cup fourth round after the League One side scored a shock penalty shoot-out win over second-tier Derby yesterday. Orient earned their lucrative showdown with the Premier League champions by beating Derby 6-5 on penalties following a 1-1 after extra-time at Brisbane Road. Zech Obiero was Orient's match-winner as he beat Jacob Widell Zetterstrom from the spot after Callum Elder's spotkick was saved by Orient's Josh Keeley. Orient took the lead on 20 minutes when Omar Beckles headed the ball on to Sonny Perkins and he found Charlie Kelman, who steered in his 11th goal of the season. The Rams were back on level terms within four minutes as Marcus Harness crossed and Dajaune Brown converted from close-range. Orient were reduced to 10-men with eight minutes of extra-time remaining when Sean Clare picked up a second yellow card. Derby were unable to take advantage as Manchester-born Richie Wellens' team booked a dream home date with the seven-time FA Cup winners in February. The east London club haven't faced City since a second tier match in 1966.

Leverkusen one point behind Bayern

A second half goal from Alex Grimaldo sent Bayer Leverkusen to a 1-0 home win over Mainz, closing the gap with league leaders Bayern Munich to one point. Borussia Dortmund's struggles in the league continued with a 4-2 loss at Holstein Kiel, raising the heat on under-fire coach Nuri Sahin. In Leverkusen, Xabi Alonso's defending champions were dominant against an in-form Mainz but were held at bay until Grimaldo produced a stunning freekick after 48 minutes. Leverkusen's 10th straight win in all competitions moved them to 38 points and handed down the gauntlet to Bayern. Dortmund were heavily favoured against their promoted opponents but were overrun as Kiel scored three goals in 22 first half minutes. Shuto Machino, Phil Harres and Alexander Bernhardtsson found the net to have Kiel up by three at half-time. Dortmund's Gio Reyna and Jamie Gittens scored in the second half but the visitors could not pull off an unlikely comeback, with Jann-Fiete Arp scoring Kiel's fourth in stoppage time.

Title chasers Atalanta held by Juventus

ATALANTA crept closer to Serie A leaders Napoli yesterday after drawing an entertaining match with Juventus 1-1 and moving to within four points of the summit, while AC Milan came from behind to beat Como. Mateo Retegui salvaged a point for Atalanta with a close-range header 12 minutes from time to level Pierre Kalulu's 54th-minute opener for Juve. "It was a great match tonight, and I'm very happy with the way my boys played," said Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini told Sky. "It was difficult going behind because we were hoping to go ahead but I think at the end of the day a draw is probably a fair result." In the earlier match, Theo Hernandez and Rafael Leao saved Milan from an embarrassing defeat at Como with the goals which gave Sergio Conceicao's new team a 2-1 win. "They (Como) are a good team with a good coach, it's not easy to play here," said Conceicao. "It was an even game but we can't concede as much as we did, we need to be more organised."

Hammers have set foundation after riding luck: Potter

■ BY ANDY SIMS

GRAHAM POTTER admitted West Ham rode their luck as they secured a 3-2 victory over Fulham in his first home match in charge.

Goals from Carlos Soler, Tomas Soucek and Lucas Paqueta made it a winning start in the Premier League for new boss Potter, who took over from the sacked Julen Lopetegui last week.

However, they were helped by some horrendous Fulham defending, with goalkeeper Bernd Leno in particular having a night to forget.

They also let Alex Iwobi score twice with crosses which flew straight in, to maintain their average of conceding two goals a game this season, while Fulham hit the crossbar twice as well.

"I'm very happy with the result," said Potter. "The performance was one of high effort, high togetherness, understanding we have to suffer at times.

"It was far from perfect long term, but as a start point it's a foundation. There's lots to do, but a great start."

Fulham dominated the first 20 minutes, but West Ham's fortunes

changed on the half-hour mark thanks to an ill-judged pass across his own penalty area by Andreas Pereira.

With Leno out of position, Soler calmly placed his first-time shot into the back of an empty net, and three minutes later Soucek swept home the second.

Six minutes into the second half Fulham pulled one back when Raul Jimenez went to prod in Iwobi's cross.

Although the Mexican did not get a touch, it was enough to put off Hammers keeper Lukasz Fabianski as the ball drifted into the net.

Yet Fulham gifted a two-goal cushion back to West Ham when Leno, under pressure from substitute Danny Ings, played the ball straight to Paqueta who rolled it into an empty net.

"They were gifts, but from our pressure," added Potter. "They were errors but I think we forced the errors. We rode our luck at times.

"But where we are at, and with the players we have missing, and after an intense FA Cup game at Aston Villa on Friday, I'm delighted with three points and three goals and the win." – The Independent

Maresca salutes James

Chelsea's fit-again captain scores late leveller at Stamford Bridge

■ BY ROBERT O'CONNOR

CHELSEA head coach Enzo Maresca said Reece James deserved his moment after his freekick rescued a point in the fifth minute of stoppage time against Bournemouth.

The captain continued his comeback from a hamstring injury as a second half substitute and rifled in the goal at the death that made it 2-2, but nevertheless Maresca saw his side's winless run in the Premier League stretch to five games.

It was James' first league goal since he netted in a draw with Tottenham in August 2022, as he marked his return to the side in a league game for the first time since November.

"He deserved it after a difficult moment and it gave us the point," said Maresca.

"I'm happy for him and happy for us. The target for him now is to try to be fit until the end (of the season) and he's going to help us for the way we want to play."

Chelsea had enough first half chances to finish Bournemouth with Nicolas Jackson at fault for spurning the best of them.

Before that he had set up the opening goal for Cole Palmer, producing an intelligent turn on the ball to escape three Bournemouth players before producing the perfect pass for Chelsea's top scorer to run on to and slot home.

The Senegal striker then struck a post and later blasted over from six yards with the goal gaping.

Bournemouth took full advantage of Jackson's profligacy in the second half, levelling through Justin Kluivert's penalty before Antoine

Semenyo made it 2-1, beating young defender Josh Acheampong then sending a rocket inside Robert Sanchez's near post.

James' late intervention rescued Chelsea, but their winless run in the league went on.

"Probably one of our best first halves of the season, the way we were playing on the ball and off the ball, we created so many chances," said Maresca.

"The first half has to finish with a different score. I think at least 2-0 is what we deserved. Second half after the penalty, the game completely changed. We dropped a little bit and we need to understand the reason why.

"The feeling is a little bit shame. When you play like that in the first half you have to be clinical. The game was completely, one hundred per cent under control."

Bournemouth were fortunate not to lose David Brooks to a red card in the second half for what looked like a hair pull on Marc Cucurella, a pitch-side VAR review sparing the winger.

"When there is not intention to take the ball, it's a red," said Maresca.

"How can they judge that was not dangerous? In my opinion it's a red."

Bournemouth boss Andoni Iraola took a different view of the incident, arguing that Robert Jones was right to let Brooks off with a caution.

"I don't understand why the VAR asked the referee to go and check," he said.

"There was no violence, I think it's a clear yellow card. For me Brooks never wants to do anything other than stop the counter (attack).

"When you consider how Chelsea played and we played, I don't think we deserved to win. I don't think we were better than Chelsea." – The Independent



Bournemouth's Ryan Christie (left) fights for the ball against Chelsea's Cole Palmer during their Premier League match. – AFPIC

ARSENAL'S season was rocked on Sunday afternoon when Gabriel Jesus was stretchered off with a nasty-looking injury.

It was confirmed on Tuesday that Jesus will sit the rest of the season out after picking up an ACL rupture in the Manchester United match.

With a Premier League title race and Champions League knockout football to come, the injury has left Arteta in the lurch somewhat.

It could force the Gunners into the transfer market this month, with talk of a move for a forward beginning to pick up.

But should Mikel Arteta and co. look to solve the problem internally, *Express Sport* have detailed three ways Arsenal can fill the Jesus void.

Raheem Sterling handed opportunity to turn form around

The frustrating part for Arsenal is Jesus was just beginning to find form and plug the goal gap left behind by talisman Bukayo Saka – the Brazil international had netted six goals in his previous six appearances for the capital club prior to the

How Arsenal can fill Jesus void

weekend's FA Cup clash.

Arteta turned to on-loan Chelsea ace Raheem Sterling in the United game and it's likely, for the time being at least, he does the same going forward.

The pair offer similar traits in attack and while Sterling is a little more direct than his former Manchester City teammate, the English international did impress as a substitute against United.

Trossard in on the right

Sterling isn't the only senior forward in the Arsenal ranks, with Leonardo Trossard waiting in the wings.

Having made an immediate impact upon his arrival in January 2023, Trossard's form has stuttered in recent months and the ex-Brighton man has found minutes in the starting XI hard to come by.

But without a goal in any of his last 11

appearances across all competitions, the Belgian will have to up his productivity if he's to become a viable option.

Tactical reshuffle

As for a wildcard option, perhaps Arteta could look to repurpose Myles Lewis-Skelly as a make-shift wide-forward?

The teenager has caught the eye since breaking into the senior set-up and while it has predominantly been at leftback, Lewis-Skelly has shown plenty of class in the attacking third.

Arteta has the flexibility to do so, at least in his defensive area, given Riccardo Calafiori and the lesser-seen Kieran Tierney can fill in at leftback instead.

It wouldn't be Arteta's first-choice solution, but as a result of their deficiencies elsewhere, it could be a case of needs must.

BY REUBEN ROSSO-POWELL

Plenty to ponder

PEP GUARDIOLA says he needs to think about the reasons why Manchester City are prone to throwing away leads after they shipped a two-goal advantage late on to 2-2 draw with Brentford at Gtech Community Stadium.

Phil Foden's second half brace had City on course for a third successive Premier League win but Brentford's Yoane Wissa pulled one back in the 82nd minute before skipper Christian Norgaard nodded in an added-time equaliser.

The draw adds to a string of similar collapses for Guardiola's men this season, including their derby defeat to Manchester United where two late goals from a winning position saw them lose at



Manchester City's Erling Haaland (centre) eyes the ball during his team's Premier League match against Brentford. -AFP/IC

home to Ruben Amorim's men last month.

"I have to think about it," Guardiola said when asked why City are dropping points from winning positions.

"We have the situation we have, I think it's a little different to games like the United game but it's true and I need to think about it.

"We were close and we had chances, we didn't take the right decisions. At the end they put a lot in the box and he (Norgaard) was there."

The Dane was unmarked in added time and managed to power his header past Stefan Ortega, who palmed the effort into the net.

Guardiola said that his side being inferior to Brentford from a physical point of view was a factor in them conceding the late goal.

He explained: "Between 2-1 and 2-2 it was good, we controlled but after that they put players in the box, they are stronger than us in that department and they equalised.

"They put six or seven in the box for crosses and (in that area) they are better. They are taller, they are stronger with the head.

"Of course we were tired but we couldn't close the cross, our holding midfielders don't have the skills to defend these type of balls because we have other types of players right now and we couldn't defend that situation."

City have won the Premier League in each of the past four seasons but a run of just one win in nine league games in November and December damaged their hopes of lifting the

Guardiola seeks answers after City blow two-goal lead against Brentford

trophy this term. Victories over Leicester and West Ham, as well as an 8-0 thrashing of League Two Salford City in the FA Cup had boosted City morale, but this will feel like two points dropped.

Brentford's fightback against the champions comes after their disappointing FA Cup exit to Championship strugglers Plymouth on Saturday. "The whole performance - I'm extremely happy with that," Bees boss Thomas Frank said.

"We went toe-for-toe with one of the best teams in the world who can produce unbelievable pieces of brilliance.

"It was a well-deserved point. We lacked cutting edge before the goal but we showed that in the last 10, where we showed a fantastic mentality." - The Independent

WINNING NUMBERS da macai

Draw/Date: 15/01/25 (Wed) Draw/No: S589/25 Venue: WISMA GENTING, KL

1+3D SUPER1+3D

1st Prize	3528
2nd Prize	8592
3rd Prize	9436

Starter	Consolation
3809 4635	1729 2826
9665 3856	7782 9522
7429 4017	0021 8894
8722 1856	4071 7809
9009 2537	7023 9409

1+3D Jackpot

Jackpot 1 RM6,462,019.20

3528 + 8592	8592 + 3528
3528 + 9436	9436 + 3528
8592 + 9436	9436 + 8592

Jackpot 2 RM115,703.10

Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

3+3D Bonus

1st Prize	Bonus	1st Prize Bonus
723 528	+ DRAGON	RM110,000.00
2nd Prize	Bonus	2nd Prize Bonus
748 592	+ BOAR	RM1,105,904.60
3rd Prize	Bonus	3rd Prize Bonus
949 436	+ ROOSTER	RM1,601,506.00

Starter	Consolation
523 809 884 635	591 729 102 826
019 665 473 856	457 782 419 522
947 429 204 017	970 021 438 894
528 722 991 856	954 071 697 809
859 009 092 537	277 023 669 409

3D

1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
528	592	436

3D Jackpot

Jackpot RM682,813.10

528 + 592 + 436	592 + 436 + 528
528 + 436 + 592	436 + 528 + 592
592 + 528 + 436	436 + 592 + 528

Winning combination matches the Top 3 Prizes in any order.

1+3D Jackpot 2 RM111,091.40 won on 12/1/2025!



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SPORTS TOTO RESULTS

DRAW NO: 5911/2025 DATE: 15/01/2025 (WED)
STM LOTTERY SDN. BHD.
199901000090 (8426D)

TOTO 4D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

1st Prize	8847
2nd Prize	6734
3rd Prize	2983

Special	Consolation
5125 8194	8012 6672
8330 1780	4529 5392
7992 4520	9191 8621
3299 9706	2467 7305
9198 5605	2971 8596

4D JACKPOT

Jackpot 1 RM 13,901,728.44

8847 6734	6734 8847
8847 2983	2983 8847
6734 2983	2983 6734

Jackpot 2 RM 494,588.44

Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

4D Zodiac

1st Prize	8847	OX
2nd Prize	6734	
3rd Prize	2983	
4th Prize	Special Prize	
5th Prize	Consolation Prize	
6th Prize	Any 4D drawn number	

TOTO 5D & 6D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

5D	1ST	5 1 0 7 9	
	4TH	1 0 7 9	
2ND	6 0 0 7 8	5TH	0 7 9
3RD	6 1 8 7 7	6TH	7 9

6D	1ST	3 2 3 6 4 3	
2ND	3 2 3 6 4	or	2 3 6 4 3
3RD	3 2 3 6	or	3 6 4 3
4TH	3 2 3	or	6 4 3
5TH	3 2	or	4 3

TOTO GAMES GIVES YOU MORE WINNING CHANCES!

SUPREME 7/35 6 15 19 30 33 44

Jackpot RM 93,356,278.22

POWER 7/35 20 35 37 39 43 54

Jackpot RM 6,364,837.25

STAR 7/35 25 39 40 44 48 50 + 30

Jackpot 1 RM 2,568,509.76

Jackpot 2 RM 256,362.74

Bayo denies Cardiff

WATFORD arrested their four-match losing run in dramatic fashion as Vakoun Bayo's 87th-minute header snatched a fortuitous draw at relegation-threatened Cardiff City.

Cardiff were the better side in a slow-burner of an encounter between two teams lacking in confidence and, after several missed chances, they got their reward when Cian Ashford's composed finish put them in front in the second half.

But after a meek performance which seemed destined to end in another defeat, Watford scored with their first effort on target as Bayo headed in from Kwadwo Baah's cross.

The draw lifts Watford up one place to eighth in the Championship, two points adrift of the playoff places.

Cardiff climb out of the relegation zone as they move up to 21st in the table - one point clear of the bottom three - but they will feel cruelly denied not to have won.

"Frustrated for the players, they have worked really hard again and deserved to take three points, but if you don't do enough you give teams the opportunity to get back in the game," Cardiff manager Omer Riza told *BBC Sport*.

"The last four games we should have got eight points more in the league and it would have taken us to 13th, 14th, but it's shouda, woulda, coulda.

"We need to control the game a little bit more when we are in front. We need to kill the energy and kill the momentum and we are not quite doing that at the moment." - Agencies

Rashford breaks social media silence

MARCUS RASHFORD broke his social media silence by posting a cryptic video yesterday amid swirling speculation about his Manchester United future.

The 27-year-old forward is on the brink of an emotional Old Trafford exit, which could accelerate imminently ahead of a reported crunch meeting between his representatives and the club.

According to Gianluca Di Marzio, Rashford's brother and agent, Dwaine Maynard, will meet United chiefs to communicate his desired destination today.

The report adds that AC Milan expect to win the race for his signature and will prioritise the deal over a swoop for wantaway Manchester City right-back

Kyle Walker.

Rashford hasn't featured for his boyhood club since being hauled off in the 2-1 win at Viktoria Plzen on Dec 12 while the visitors trailed.

He has reminded his dwindling number of supporters that he remained hard at work behind the scenes by posting a video on his *Instagram* story.

The short clip shows a hooded individual with the England international's same leg tattoos using an exercise bike inside a gym.

Some fans have jibed about the level of effort Rashford appeared to be putting into the exercise and how it paralleled criticism of his work rate on the pitch this season. - Express Newspapers

Visit www.sportstoto.com.my for e-Results and more info.



RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Brentford 2 (Wissa 82, Norgaard 90+2) **Manchester City 2** (Foden 66, 78), **Chelsea 2** (Palmer 13, James 90+5) **Bournemouth 2** (Kluivert 50-pen, Semenyo 68), **Nottingham Forest 1** (Wood 8) **Liverpool 1** (Jota 66), **West Ham 3** (Soler 31, Soucek 33, Paqueta 67) **Fulham 2** (Iwobi 51, 76).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	20	14	5	1	48	20	47
Nottm Forest	21	12	5	4	30	20	41
Arsenal	20	11	7	2	39	18	40
Chelsea	21	10	7	4	41	26	37
Newcastle	20	10	5	5	34	22	35
Man City	21	10	5	6	38	29	35
Bournemouth	21	9	7	5	32	25	34
Aston Villa	20	9	5	6	30	32	32
Fulham	21	7	9	5	32	30	30
Brentford	21	8	4	9	40	37	28
Brighton	20	6	10	4	30	29	28
West Ham	21	7	5	9	27	41	26
Tottenham	20	7	3	10	42	30	24
Man Utd	20	6	5	9	23	28	23
Crystal Palace	20	4	9	7	21	28	21
Everton	19	3	8	8	15	25	17
Wolves	20	4	4	12	31	45	16
Ipswich	20	3	7	10	20	35	16
Leicester	20	3	5	12	23	44	14
Southampton	20	1	3	16	12	44	6

CHAMPIONSHIP: Cardiff 1 Watford 1, Plymouth 1 Oxford 1.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	26	15	8	3	48	19	53
Burnley	26	14	10	2	31	9	52
Sheff Utd	26	16	6	4	36	17	52
Sunderland	26	14	8	4	39	22	50
Mid'boro	26	11	8	7	43	32	41
West Brom	26	9	13	4	42	21	40
Blackburn	25	11	6	8	28	23	39

SERIE A: Atalanta 1 (Retegui 78) **Juventus 1** (Kalulu 54), **Como 1** (Diao 60) **AC Milan 2** (Hernandez 71, Leao 76).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli	20	15	2	3	32	12	47
Inter Milan	18	13	4	1	46	15	43
Atalanta	20	13	4	3	44	21	43
Lazio	20	11	3	6	34	28	36
Juventus	20	7	13	0	32	17	34
Florentina	19	9	5	5	32	20	32

BUNDESLIGA: Holstein Kiel 4 Borussia Dortmund 2, Bayer Leverkusen 1 Mainz 0, Eintracht Frankfurt 4 Freiburg 1, Wolfsburg 5 Moenchengladbach 1.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B. Munich	16	12	3	1	48	13	39
B. Leverkusen	17	11	5	1	41	23	38
E. Frankfurt	17	10	3	4	40	24	33
RB Leipzig	16	9	3	4	28	22	30
Mainz	17	8	4	5	30	21	28
Freiburg	17	8	3	6	25	30	27

FA CUP (3rd round): **Leyton Orient 1 Derby 1** (Leyton Orient won 6-5 on pen), **Mansfield 0 Wigan 2** (Asgaard 48, 54), **Preston 2** (Osmajic 32, 47) **Charlton 1** (Berry 40).

COPA DEL REY (Round of 16): **Ourense 0 Valencia 2** (Carmona 50-og, Sadiq 78).

FRENCH CUP (Round of 32): **Dives-Cabourg 1 Le Puy 0**, **Guingamp 2 Sochaux 2** (Guingamp won 9-8 on pen), **Le Mans 1 Valenciennes 1** (Le Mans won 4-3 on pen), **Reims 1 Monaco 1** (Reims won 3-1 on pen), **Bastia 0 Nice 1**, **Marseille 1 Lille 1** (Lille won 4-3 on pen).

SHORTS

Nurul Izzah wins elite sprint event

NATIONAL women's track cyclist Nurul Izzah Izzati Mohd Asri's win in the women's elite sprint event at the President's Cup Series 1 on Wednesday will serve as her in good stead in the upcoming 2025 Asian Track Cycling Championships next month.

The 22-year-old put on an excellent display to beat South Korean cyclist Kim Haeun in the first and third rounds of the finals to win the gold medal at the Malaysian National Velodrome.

Her Malaysian teammate, Nur Alyssa Mohd Farid won the bronze.

"It was very difficult to compete against the

Malaysia seeks to host 2026 UCI Track Nations Cup

MALAYSIA has declared its intention in hosting one of the three rounds of the International Cycling Union (UCI) Track Nations Cup at the National Velodrome next year.

Malaysian National Cycling Federation (MNCF) president Datuk Amarjit Singh said they had submitted a letter of intent to the UCI late last year, seeking to host the prestigious international series for the first time in the country.

Amarjit said the decision on whether Malaysia will be selected as one of the hosts for the 2026 UCI Track Nations Cup will be announced this

June.

"I am also told that there are many other countries who have also sent in their bid that they want to do the Nation's Cup as well in 2026.

"So that is something that we have to wait and see, the process and how the selection is going to be," he said when met at the Asean Track Series (President Cup) 1 yesterday.

While the MNCF are hopeful for the 2026 event, Amarjit personally favoured Malaysia to host the UCI Track Nations Cup in 2027 but he feels that would be difficult to do so.



National track cyclist Mohammad Fadhil Mohd Zonis (right) leading the pack in the Elite Men's Keirin event yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

He said this was due to the fact that 2027 will coincide with the start of the qualification period for the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles (LA28).

"I can already imagine that there will be a lot of other countries who will be gunning for that (UCI Track Nations Cup host).

"This is because the idea is to have one country from Asia, one from the Europe side, and one maybe from Oceania or America," he said.

Apart from that, Amarjit expressed hopes that Malaysia could secure the opportunity to host the UCI Track Cycling World Championships post LA28 Olympics.

However, he said that the UCI has specific requirements for such a prestigious event, including guarantees and support from the government, as well as ensuring full participation from cycling nations. — Bernama

MOE, Perodua to find new talent

Badminton Talent Development Programme will be platform to unearth potential students

THE Badminton Talent Development Programme of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) together with Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd (Perodua) KPM-Perodua is a platform to unearth talent among students nationwide.

MOE Sports, Co-Curriculum and Arts Division deputy director Jalaluddin Ismail said apart from supporting the one pupil, one sport policy, the programme is an initiative by the ministry to produce new players in badminton, thus representing the country at the international level.

"Basically, students participating in this development programme who have the potential will be offered to continue their studies at the Bukit Jalil Sports School (SSBJ) and the Badminton Academy under the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM).

"Since this programme started in 2018, a total of 25 trainees have been at SSBJ to continue their studies and continue training in an effort to improve their performance and talent to participate in high level competitions," he said.

He was speaking to reporters after officiating the National Level Badminton Talent Development Programme at the

Tengku Anis Badminton Hall, Pengkalan Chepa yesterday, which was also attended by Perodua president and chief executive officer Datuk Seri Zainal Ahmad.

Jalaluddin said at the programme, a total of 2,400 students from 70 schools nationwide participated in the various categories contested.

"As a result of this programme, two players (students) became champions at the World Junior Badminton Championships last November in China. We (MOE) want to produce the best badminton players at the state, national and international levels," he said.

Meanwhile, Zainal said the Talent Development Programme was a collaboration between his party and the MOE to provide opportunities for students to showcase their talents in the sport.

"The collaboration between Perodua and the MOE allows us to communicate more effectively for the students to ensure that training and tournaments can be organised.

"This collaborative programme is held to provide a platform for young talents to participate in systematic programmes, as well as polish their talents in badminton," he said. — Bernama

South Koreans as they have many strong senior cyclists.

"In the second round, I was rather slow as I made a tactical mistake but I didn't repeat it and managed to do my best in the determining round," she said.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Ridwan Sahrom won the bronze medal in the men's elite sprint event when he beat compatriot Muhammad Fadhil Mohd Zonis.

Australian cyclist Sam Gallagher won the gold after he beat South Korean Bae Junhyeong, who received the silver medal.

Twincity Marathon 2025 draws record 13k runners

THE Twincity Marathon in Putrajaya this year

made history as more than 13,000 local and foreign runners participated in its 10th edition on Jan 11 and 12.

The championship featured four categories – 42km, 21km, 12km and 5km – further solidifying its position as one of the most anticipated running events in Malaysia.

Datuk Najib Ibrahim, adviser of event organiser Ten Senses Sdn Bhd, expressed his deep appreciation to all parties who made the event a success.

"This achievement would not have been possible without the strong support from the sponsors, participants and the entire running community," he said in a statement on Wednesday.

Over the past decade, the Twincity Marathon has attracted more than 50,000 participants.

Winning Results

Magnum Corporation Sdn Bhd (8272-D) Full payment guaranteed

Draw No: 148/25 Date: 15/01/2025

4D Classic			
1st Prize	9422		
2nd Prize	6564		
3rd Prize	7286		
SPECIAL		CONSOLATION	
2460	5947	4842	3145
1399	6192	5907	3833
0453	9168	9065	8418
6093	8180	5984	5405
2036	0591	5269	8968

4D Jackpot	
Jackpot 1	RM7,352,200.64
9422 + 6564	9422 + 7286
6564 + 9422	6564 + 7286
7286 + 9422	7286 + 6564
Jackpot 2	RM166,515.47
WON	
Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.	

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Magnum Life	
1 8 12 14 18 19 30 34	
+	
4 20	
Grand Prize	
RM1,000 EVERY DAY for 20 years	
2nd Prize	
RM1,000 EVERY DAY for 100 days	

Jackpot Gold	
Jackpot 1	RM10,330,962.75
Jackpot 1 - Group 1 + Golden Number	
Jackpot 2	RM100,000.00
Jackpot 2 - Group 2 + Golden Number	
GROUP 1	2 2 6 4 8 6
GROUP 2	2 2 6 4 8 OR 2 6 4 8 6
GROUP 3	2 2 6 4 OR 6 4 8 6
GROUP 4	2 2 6 OR 4 8 6
GROUP 5	2 2 OR 8 6
OR 6 4	
GOLDEN NUMBER	1 4

All jackpot amounts stated above are for this Draw. Subject to T&Cs of the Scheme. Please visit to www.magnum4d.my for more info. THE BIGGER PLAY IS TO PLAY RESPONSIBLY.



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Jun Hao on cloud nine after defeating fifth seed Shi Feng

NATIONAL men's singles shuttler Leong Jun Hao was over the moon after finally overcoming his opponent, Li Shi Feng of China 18-21, 21-17, 21-17 to advance to the second round at the 2025 India Open on Wednesday.

The world No. 28 said his patient game plan against Shi Feng paid off, especially considering their previous head-to-head record, which had not

been in his favour.

"For sure it means quite a lot because before this I never won even one game against him.

"He's a tough opponent, physically and in the strokes he plays - he's an attacking, all-round player. I just played with what I have and did my best," he said through an audio recording shared to the media by Badminton World Federation (BWF).

Jun Hao will face another Chinese shuttler Weng Hongyang today for a place in the last eight.

Jun Hao said even though the Chinese opponent would be a tough nut to crack, he would focus on his recovery and continue working on his game recovery in a bid to find his way to the last eight.

Meanwhile, Malaysia's top national mixed doubles pair, Chen

Tang Jie-Toh Ee Wei, are delighted to achieve the highest ranking of their careers, climbing to third in the world.

"We proud to achieve it but we will stay humble and hungry to win," said Tang Jie.

National professional mixed doubles pair Goh Soon Huat-Shevon Lai Jamie began their 2025 India Open campaign in style by defeating Indonesia's Rinov

Rivaldy-Lisa Ayu Kusumawati 21-17, 21-17 in just 36 minutes yesterday.

The fourth seeded Malaysians will play Japan's Yuta Watanabe-Maya Taguchi in the round of 16 today.

Watanabe-Taguchi defeated another Malaysian professional pair, Wong Tien Ci-Lim Chiew Sien, 21-17, 21-15 in the first round. - Bernama

⇒ Zheng stunned at Melbourne Park ⇒ page 28 ⇒ MOE, Perodua to find new talent ⇒ page 31

Up where they belong

Forest not top because of luck, says Slot after super subs salvage draw for Reds



Nottingham Forest's Callum Hudson-Odoi (right) vies with Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold during their English Premier League match at The City Ground in Nottingham yesterday. - AFP/IC

BY SUNNY BADWAL

LIVERPOOL boss Arne Slot believes Nottingham Forest deserve to be in the title race after his side were held to a 1-1 draw at the City Ground.

Forest hit the front inside 10 minutes as Chris Wood slotted home his 13th goal of the campaign and deserved their lead heading into the interval after Liverpool failed to register a shot on target.

Forest looked like they would close the gap to the League leaders to just three points until Diogo Jota headed in from a corner by fellow substitute Kostas Tsimikas just 22 seconds after the pair were introduced.

Forest had goalkeeper Matz Sels to thank for their share of the spoils after he made a string of outstanding second-half saves to hold Liverpool to a second successive League draw.

Slot does not think Forest will drop a lot of points between now and the end of the season.

He said: "After 20 games you can judge the table much better than the first five to 10 games and I don't think they're there because of luck.

"It's so hard for everyone to play against, they have already had some difficult away games and it shows you they are a team that can compete with the top end of the league table.

"I see no reason for them to drop a lot of points, because they are a difficult team to play against.

"We only conceded one (counter-attack) here today in 98 minutes of total domination.

"Being 1-0 down here and it's so hard to score against this team, it's not what we wanted, we wanted three points."

Slot admitted he did not think the impact of Tsimikas and Jota would be so instantly dramatic.

"Scoring from a set-piece isn't something I had in mind when I brought the two of them in," he added.

"We brought an attacker (Jota) in for a

defender (Ibrahima Konate) to play even more attacking football than we did because we needed goals.

"But of course Jota scored the goal and Kostas with the set-piece. (Jota) had a big impact, he was the one apart from Mo (Salah) that had a few chances to score."

Slot hid his frustration at a second successive League draw as he said: "Since the New Year, in two out of three games most agree with me where I say we deserve more than we got."

Forest extended their unbeaten League run to seven matches and are still only six points behind Liverpool at the top of the table.

Nuno Espirito Santo displayed his pride at his players' fighting performance.

He said: "We are competing very well. This is the mentality of the squad, it's about playing, competing and improving.

"You know what I think about the table, for now it is not important, it is how we prepare for Southampton.

"We have to give credit to our players when we face such talented opponents and we raise the bar and challenge ourselves. It's huge for us.

"It was a lesson for all of us. This is how we want to compete - to the limits of our efforts - and we saw that," Nuno said after the final whistle.

"I'm very, very proud of the work of the players. We finished on the ropes but the team worked very well.

"We are competing very well. I keep insisting, and this is the approach and the mentality of the squad.

"It is about playing, competing, improving, realising what are our strengths and our weaknesses and getting to know ourselves better. That can only make us compete in the future in a better way.

"We are going to play against everybody. In the end, we will see how many points we have."

Nuno also hailed the part the City Ground crowd played in helping his team secure a big result.

"It was very special," Nuno added. "The bond the team and the fans are building on this journey we want to share together is very helpful. We cannot thank them enough." - The Independent

