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Global South ties vital

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says changing world power dynamics present compelling case for broadening horizons and diversifying alliances to tap into vast new potentials and opportunities.

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No let-up in fight against 'Big C'

With one in 10 men and one in nine women at risk of developing disease, National Cancer Society of Malaysia MD stresses need for all parties to work together to raise public awareness.

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STATELY ACCOLADE ... Peru President Dina Ercilia Boluarte Zegarra awarding Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim with *El Sol Del Peru*, the Latin American nation's highest honour, at the Government Palace in Lima on Wednesday. - AFP/PIIC

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Queen presents Anugerah Seniman Negara award to cartoonist Lat

KUALA LUMPUR: Her Majesty the Queen of Malaysia Raja Zarith Sofiah presented the ninth *Anugerah Seniman Negara* award to famed cartoonist Datuk Lat at the *Anugerah Seni Negara* 2024 ceremony on Wednesday.

Also present was Tunku Tun Aminah Sultan Ibrahim, who was accompanied by Tourism, Arts and Culture Deputy Minister Khairul Firdaus Akhbar Khan.

Lat, whose full name is Mohd Nor Khalid, received a cash prize of RM60,000, a certificate, trophy and a set of the national attire.

He was also named *Seniman Tamu* by the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry, with an incentive to continue his work and the eligibility to receive first-class treatment at government hospitals.

The ceremony also saw renowned singer Datuk Seri Siti Nurhaliza Tarudin being presented with the special recognition of *Anugerah Biduan Negara* by Khairul Firdaus.

She received RM30,000, a set of the national attire, a certificate, trophy and the *Seniman Tamu* title.

Datuk Mokhzani Ismail (music), Zakaria Ariffin (acting/stage performance), Wong Kit Yaw (dance), Bangie Anak Embol (handicraft) and Wong Hoy Cheong (visual arts) each received the *Anugerah Karyawan Seni* title, RM30,000, a set of the national attire, a certificate, trophy and the *Seniman Tamu* title.

The *Anugerah Pendukung Seni* was presented to RTM in the media category, Yayasan Hasanah in the corporate category and the Temple of Fine Arts in the NGO category, with each receiving RM10,000, a certificate and a trophy.

Anugerah Seni Negara is the highest recognition from the government to artistes and creative industry icons for their contributions to the arts industry.

Khairul Firdaus said *Anugerah Seni Negara* is the government's ongoing commitment to recognise and honour local arts and creative industry talents.

He said the recognition is to appreciate their exceptional contributions, leadership and credibility in enriching the nation's arts and cultural heritage. – Bernama

Vital to strengthen ties with Global South: PM

► 'Focus has historically been on narrow set of partners, but changing world dynamics present compelling case for broadening horizons, diversifying alliances'

LIMA (PERU): Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has stressed the importance of strengthening ties with the Global South, highlighting the vast untapped potential and emerging opportunities in the region.

"It is crucial to shift course slightly and enhance collaboration with the Global South, tapping into the vast new potentials and opportunities," he said in his opening remarks during a roundtable with captains of industry from Malaysia and Peru on Wednesday.

He said the focus has historically been on a narrow set of partners, but the changing global dynamics present a compelling case for broadening the horizons and diversifying alliances.

He added that while the United States remains Malaysia's top investor, Putrajaya also has a strong trading partnership with

China, "and we are collaborating effectively in multiple areas. That is the way forward".

"We should not be dictated to by anyone. Instead, we must be guided by what is best for our country, as determined by our own people.

"I believe Malaysia and Peru share the same perspective. We need to remain open and neutral. In Asean, we call it centrality."

Anwar said both countries share several major concerns, as both are multiracial, and are working to bring about change and transition within the respective nations.

"Peru has policies on energy transition, environmental transition and multilateralism as well as investment, trade, governance and anti-corruption efforts. All these areas are critical, and I express that now is the time to take concrete action."

He said alignment of some of the policies

between Malaysia and Peru is encouraged, as both countries are members of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

"We are now closely linked through Asean and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation." Anwar also launched Yinson Holdings Bhd's Matarani Solar Park in Peru.

Yinson Renewables has completed the acquisition of the 97 MWp Matarani solar project in Peru from Grenergy Renewables, an international independent power producer, developer, and engineering, procurement and construction company with a strong track record in Latin America.

The project is located in the Mollendo desert in the Arequipa region, one of the world's highest solar irradiation areas. Most of the project's energy has been contracted through a power purchase agreement with a bankable off-taker for the next 15 years.

Project Matarani had recently entered commercial operation, injecting about 260 GWh of renewable energy into the Peruvian grid annually, enough to meet the energy needs of about 62,000 Peruvian households and prevent the emission of more than 56,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

Anwar receives Peru's highest honour

LIMA (PERU): Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim received Peru's highest honour, the *El Sol del Peru*, during his first official visit to the Latin American nation since assuming office in 2022.

The conferment was done by Peruvian President Dina Ercilia Boluarte Zegarra at the Government Palace on Wednesday.

El Sol de Peru (The Sun of Peru) is awarded to sovereigns, heads of state, government heads, foreign affairs ministers, state ministers, accredited foreign ambassadors or presidents of public authorities.

Anwar said he is deeply honoured to be conferred the prestigious Order.

"I understand that this distinguished award was established soon after Peru declared its independence from Spain in 1821, making it the oldest civilian honour in the Americas.

"As with any honour I receive in my role as prime minister, I accept this distinction on behalf of the people of Malaysia. We will cherish this as a symbol of the enduring friendship between our two nations," he said after receiving the Order.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said Peru holds a certain familiarity that is hard to ignore.

"Like Malaysia, it is a thriving multicultural society, with a megadiverse ecosystem that mirrors our own. Both our nations strive to adapt amid growing geopolitical shifts and economic rivalries."

He said Malaysia sees immense potential in strengthening cooperation in areas such as trade and investment as well as promoting the interests of the Global South.

"The tyranny of distance will not hold us back from building a fruitful partnership."

He added that it is his sincere hope that this would mark a new beginning in the relationship between both countries.

Anwar's visit to Peru, which includes his participation in the 31st Apec Economic Leaders' Meeting from yesterday to Nov 16, is expected to strengthen bilateral relations between Malaysia and Peru.

He is accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan and Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Zafrul Aziz.

Peru, a western South American country, is bordered by Ecuador and Colombia in the north and Brazil in the east. – Bernama

Peruvian president to visit M'sia next year

LIMA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Peruvian President Dina Ercilia Boluarte Zegarra has accepted his invitation to visit Malaysia.

He said the visit is expected to take place by the end of next year.

"I invited President Dina Ercilia to visit Malaysia and she immediately accepted my invitation," he said after their bilateral meeting at the Government Palace on Wednesday, Bernama reported.

The meeting with Dina Ercilia is a follow-up to the first meeting of the two leaders on the sidelines of the Apec Economic Leaders' Week in San Francisco in the United States in November 2023.



UNDIVIDED ATTENTION ... Transport Minister Anthony Loke being briefed by Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research director-general Dr Siti Zaharah Ishak at an exhibition held in conjunction with the launch of a guide for electric vehicles in Malacca yesterday. – BERNAMAPIC

Plan to place Felda under ministry to be discussed

KUALA LUMPUR: The proposal for the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) to be placed under the Rural and Regional Development Ministry will be presented to the Cabinet for discussion, Dewan Rakyat was told on Wednesday.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Dr Zaliha Mustafa said the ministry would require specific discussions with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim through the Cabinet meeting.

"(The proposal) will be brought to the knowledge of the Cabinet and relevant ministers."

Felda is now under the Felda Regulatory Division of the Prime Minister's Department, Bernama reported.

Earlier, several MPs proposed for Felda to be regulated by the ministry, with Datuk Mohd Isam Mohd Isa (BN-Tampin) saying this would facilitate coordination with the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority and the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority.

On the Settler Development Programme, which is an initiative to increase the income of Felda settlers through agricultural and livestock activities, Zaliha said in 2019, the government allocated RM1 billion for the programme's implementation and Felda has received RM253 million.

Commenting on the RM6 million allocation for the development of Kampung Baru under Budget 2025, she said it was an allocation for the continuation of projects next year to build amenities at the Kampung Pindah field reserve in Kampung Baru here.

Fuel prices remain unchanged

KUALA LUMPUR: Retail prices for RON97 and RON95 petrol will remain unchanged at RM3.19 and RM2.05 per litre, respectively, from Nov 14 to 20.

The Finance Ministry said the retail price of diesel in Peninsular Malaysia will remain at RM2.95 per litre while in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan, the price will remain at RM2.15 per litre during the same period.

It said the price settings are fixed based on weekly retail prices of petroleum products, using the Automatic Pricing Mechanism.

"The government will continue to monitor the trends of global crude oil prices and take appropriate measures to ensure the continued welfare and wellbeing of the people." – Bernama

RM17b unclaimed money handed over to Accountant-General's Dept

KUALA LUMPUR: Companies and firms have handed over RM17 billion in unclaimed money to the Accountant-General's Department, with RM4.2 billion claimed by rightful owners as of Oct 31.

The remaining is yet to be claimed, said Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan

when winding up the debate on the Supply Bill 2025 at the committee level for the Finance Ministry in Dewan Rakyat here on Wednesday.

"Since 2022, the department has set up 184 booths to increase public awareness."

He said the government is exploring a proposal to use updated

data from the National Registration Department to locate rightful owners or heirs and directly credit the funds into their accounts.

He also said the government is prepared to consider proposals from the Kelantan and Terengganu governments for projects and programmes funded through

compassionate aid, particularly those aimed at poverty alleviation and basic infrastructure improvement.

"These include the Central Spine Road project and the construction of a water treatment plant in Kelantan, along with hospital construction, rural road links and upgrades to rural schools in Terengganu." – Bernama

Demand for plant-based foods rising, say experts

BY HARITH KAMAL
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➤ Shift reflects mix of health and environmental considerations in adopting sustainable and nutritious diet: Lecturer

PETALING JAYA: A surge in demand for plant-based foods, driven by the growing popularity of the "flexitarian diet", is reshaping eating habits worldwide, said food science experts.

Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Food Science and Technology senior lecturer Dr Siti Aimi Sarah Zainal Abidin said the shift reflects a mix of health and environmental considerations as more people embrace plant-based diets as a sustainable and nutritious choice.

"A growing number of Malaysians are adopting a plant-based diet for health and environmental reasons, particularly in the wake of increased awareness on sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the need to reduce carbon footprint."

She said health concerns are a major driver of this trend as plant-based foods offer a range of health benefits, especially in terms of cardiovascular health.

She also said a long-term plant-based diet could reduce blood pressure and cholesterol, help maintain a healthy weight due to its high fibre content and prevent conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and digestive issues.

She highlighted the environmental impact of reducing meat consumption as its production is a significant contributor to carbon emissions.

According to her, with SDGs

encouraging society to lower its carbon footprint, plant-based foods are emerging as a sustainable choice but there are some challenges associated with adopting such diets in Malaysia, with one barrier being the high prices.

Siti Aimi said since most raw materials are imported and sold at high prices, Malaysians could explore local ingredients.

She said there are lingering misconceptions that limit the adoption of plant-based diets, with many believing they do not provide enough essential nutrients.

"There is the perception that

plant-based foods are less tasty and more expensive."

She said education is key to overcoming such misconceptions as it could help people understand how to combine plant foods for a complete protein profile and buy affordable options, such as legumes and grains.

UiTM Food Science and Technology senior lecturer Dr Azizah Othman said the increasing interest in plant-based foods shows a significant change in consumer perspectives.

"As people become more aware of the benefits of reducing meat intake, such as a lower risk of certain diseases and reduced impact on natural resources, they are increasingly drawn to plant-based options."

"The younger generation of Malaysians are more open to plant-based foods, becoming more health-conscious and environmentally aware. This trend is evident in the growing variety of plant-based products in grocery stores, more vegan and vegetarian menu options, and an expanding presence of plant-based eateries and brands."

She clarified that although a plant-based diet has numerous health benefits, it is critical to consume sufficient nutrients, which are often obtained from supplements containing essential elements, such as vitamin B12, iron and omega-3 fatty acids.

"With a balanced nutritional plan, individuals could meet their needs through carefully selected foods, fortified options and supplements, if needed."

She said taking small, manageable steps towards plant-based diets could support one's personal health and environmental goals.



Azizah said increasing interest in plant-based foods shows a significant change in consumer perspectives.
– ADAM AMIR
HAMZAH/THESUN

App to ease checkpoint traffic down south

SINGAPORE: The Home Ministry has selected an app to facilitate immigration procedures for Malaysians at the Sultan Iskandar Building and the Sultan Abu Bakar Complex in Johor for entry and exit to Singapore, said its minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

The MyTrip, MyRentas and MyBorderPass apps are undergoing proof-of-concept (POC) trials at the Sultan Iskandar Building and the Sultan Abu Bakar Complex to evaluate their effectiveness in reducing congestion at the Malaysia-Singapore border.

"The ministry has finalised one of

the three vendors that we trialed under the POC. We submitted our recommendation to the Finance Ministry last week for approval," he told Bernama at a gathering with the Malaysian diaspora in Singapore on Wednesday night.

He said an announcement regarding the chosen app will be made soon, adding that the POC trials showed that the app effectively reduced wait times and addressed congestion issues.

Upon implementation, travellers will still need to carry their passports

for verification, although immigration procedures could be completed via the app.

Initially, the app will be available for bus and motorcycle travellers at the Sultan Iskandar Building and the Sultan Abu Bakar Complex before it is expanded to serve all travellers across all 141 entry points in Malaysia.

According to data analysis, bus and motorcycle travellers make up nearly 80% of daily cross-border traffic while private and commercial vehicles account for the remaining 20%.

"This app will contribute to

overcoming issues related to the development of the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JSSEZ), facilitating the movement of people and goods."

He said discussions are ongoing with Singapore regarding Malaysia's proposal for a single-entry immigration checkpoint for the Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link, which is under construction.

"The RTS Link will carry up to 10,000 passengers per hour, so it needs to be seamless. This will be a focus of discussions at my upcoming meeting

with Singapore Home Affairs and Law Minister K. Shanmugam on Thursday."

The RTS Link is a 4km passenger rail network with one station in Bukit Chagar, Johor Bahru and one in Woodlands North, Singapore.

He said his ministry is open to considering a special pass for Singaporeans with residences in Johor, particularly with the development of JSSEZ.

"It is a reasonable suggestion with many benefits," he said during a question-and-answer session with the Malaysian diaspora. – Bernama



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Cancer society pushes on with education campaign

➤ Efforts to focus on countering negative beliefs about breast screening among Malaysian women to increase uptake and reduce late diagnosis

BY JOSHUA PURUSHOTMAN
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PETALING JAYA: The National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM) is determined in its aggressive public education campaign to halt the growing incidents of the disease.

Its managing director Dr M. Murallitharan told *theSun* that one in 10 men and one in nine women are at risk of developing cancer, with the five most common variants being breast, colorectum, lung, nasopharynx and liver, in that order.

"This is a serious issue and it needs all parties to work together to bring about public awareness, especially since in 2020, Malaysia reported 48,639 new cases. Cancer incidence in the country is predicted to double by 2040."

He cited a study titled "Breast Cancer and Breast Cancer Screening Use - Beliefs and Behaviours in a Nationwide Study in Malaysia", co-authored by Min Min Tan, Aminatul Saadiah Abdul Jamil, Roshidi Ismail, Michael Donnelly and Tin Tin Su, and published on July 10, 2023.

In the study, the authors said many upper-middle income countries, including Malaysia, continue to face low breast cancer screening rates and patients with delayed presentation of the disease.

Murallitharan said the study investigated whether beliefs about breast cancer and the use of screening reduced the possibility of patients dying from the disease.

He said 813 women aged about 40 were randomly selected and surveyed using the validated "Awareness and Beliefs about Cancer" measure.

"The association between breast cancer screening, sociodemographic characteristics and negative beliefs about screening for the disease were analysed.

"It was shown that seven out of 10 Malaysian women believed that breast cancer screening was necessary only when experiencing cancer symptoms.



Murallitharan said cancer incidence in Malaysia is predicted to double by 2040, and all parties must work together to raise awareness on the issue. - PIC COURTESY OF NCSM

"Women over 50 years old and from households with more than one car or motorcycle were 1.6 times more likely to attend a mammogram or a clinical breast examination, while about 23% expected to feel anxious about attending screening sessions, leading them to avoid it altogether."

He said the study concluded that public health strategies or behaviour interventions targeting negative beliefs about breast cancer screening among Malaysian women may increase uptake and reduce late presentation and advanced-stage cancer.

He also said insights from the study suggested that women under 50 years old, in the lower income group without a car or motorcycle, and of Malay or Indian ethnicity are more likely to hold beliefs inhibiting breast cancer screening.

"This is why NCSM must continue with its awareness campaigns and raise funds to support its work."

Murallitharan thanked UMW Toyota Motor Sdn Bhd (UMWT) for its RM200,000 donation, which was handed to NCSM on Wednesday.

"NCSM's collaboration with UMWT continues to raise awareness about cancer and the impact it has on patients and caregivers. Its commitment towards our cause has positively impacted many lives and we aim to continue the good work together."

He said the funds raised through the partnership would be used to ensure greater mobility for patients by providing them with reliable transport for treatment sessions.

"This would alleviate one of the significant challenges that many face in accessing the care they need. The funds would also help amplify our community outreach programmes, enabling us to extend our services to more areas and reach more individuals in need of support."

UMWT president Datuk Ravindran K. said Toyota believes in the power of mobility to improve lives.

"We are honoured to partner with NCSM for the second time to support its fight against cancer and make a difference in the community.

"We have no doubt that our donation would help in its excellent work."

RM99m initiatives for Indian community

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Indian Transformation Unit (Mitra) has approved 14 initiatives worth RM99.98 million this year, the Dewan Rakyat was told on Wednesday.

Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Deputy Minister Datuk Seri R. Ramanan said the initiatives cover various aspects.

"Among the initiatives implemented or underway are the Malaysian Indian Skills Initiative valued at RM10 million, an early education subsidy programme for private kindergartens valued at RM9.38 million, an early aid programme for higher learning institution admission worth RM25 million, and a dialysis subsidy programme valued at RM7.9 million."

Ramanan said Mitra helps empower the Indian community, Bernama reported.

He said to enhance access to technical and vocational training, courses that could offer wider job opportunities for the Indian community are being managed and provided.

"Mitra will also focus on entrepreneurship development programmes and provide support to increase the Indian community's involvement in business and trade. Support for the gig economy among Indian youths will also be given special attention.

"To improve the quality of life for the Indian community, the social welfare system must be enhanced. Mitra will play the main role in devising programmes that could reduce the poverty rate within the Indian community."

Strict guidelines on working trips abroad

KUCHING: The Sarawak government follows stringent guidelines for working trips abroad, the state legislative assembly was told yesterday.

Sarawak Deputy Premier Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas said any state minister who wishes to go on overseas trips needs the approval of the Cabinet.

"All the details (of trip expenses) will be examined by the state financial secretary," he said during the third reading of the Supplementary Supply (2024) Bill.

The Bill, involving RM68,746,470, is for additional expenditure to cover the costs of various services incurred by different ministries and departments, for which funds were either not provided or insufficiently allocated in the Estimates and the First Supplementary Estimates 2024. - Bernama

Parties invited to join rare earth industry

SEREMBAN: Negeri Sembilan is prepared to welcome any company, including private landowners, interested in managing the non-radioactive rare earth element (NR-REE) industry in the state, said Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun.

"What is important is transparency. We do not want people with no experience to do it. (For) government land, we have to choose only capable companies," he told reporters after chairing the weekly state executive council meeting at Wisma Negeri on Wednesday.

He said the state would give interested parties between one and six months to explore an area for the project.

It was reported that two areas of about 400ha in the state have been approved for NR-REE mining, which will start soon.

Aminuddin said Negeri Sembilan is expected to earn higher revenue this year than the RM520 million target it set in last year's budget.

"The state's revenue has reached 95% and is expected to exceed the target by the end of the year." - Bernama

Kelantan set to better manage natural resources

KOTA BHARU: A proposal to prevent foreign companies from monopolising the management of the rare earth elements (REE) industry in Kelantan presents an opportunity for the state government to better manage its natural resources, said Kelantan Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Mohamed Fadzli Hassan.

He said the federal government's suggestion grants the state administration the right to negotiate with any mining company.

"Kelantan warmly welcomes this proposal and many companies, not just Lynas Malaysia Sdn Bhd, have shown interest and held discussions with us," he told reporters after the state executive council meeting at the Kota Darulnaim Complex on Wednesday.

"We are identifying mining companies that are truly capable and can offer

better proposals."

He said the state government not only intends to carry out mining activities but also aims to set up processing plants in Kelantan to maximise profits.

Earlier, Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad was reported as saying the government would utilise the Mineral Development Act 1994 and Federal Constitution in managing REE.

He said the federal government does not intend to encourage a monopoly company for managing REE, similar to how Petroleum Nasional Berhad operates in the oil and gas sector, Bernama reported.

Commenting on the proposal for the construction of a security and flood wall along

the Malaysia-Thailand border, he said the state government would cooperate with the federal government in discussing the matter.

"The border between Kelantan and Thailand is not a state border but a national border, so it is the responsibility of the federal government.

"The construction of the wall would not only address security concerns but also involve the development of border towns, such as Rantau Panjang and Pengkalan Kubor."

On Nov 5, the Kelantan government announced plans to propose to the federal government the construction of a wall spanning about 100km along the state's border with Thailand.

The project is seen as crucial in addressing smuggling activities and flood issues.

Swimming coach denies sexually assaulting boy

KUALA LUMPUR: A swimming coach pleaded not guilty in the Sessions Court here yesterday to a charge of sexually assaulting a five-year-old boy last week.

Ng Gwan Ho, 27, is accused of committing the act against the child for sexual purposes at a swimming school in Taman Sri Bintang, Sentul on Nov 7.

The man was charged under Section 14 (d) of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017, which provides for a maximum prison sentence of 20 years and whipping, upon conviction.

Deputy public prosecutor Atiqa Nazihah Azmi proposed bail of RM10,000 with one surety and additional conditions for the accused not to approach the victim, report to the nearest police station once a month, and hand over his passport to the court until the case is disposed of.

Judge Azrul Darus allowed the accused to be bailed at RM10,000 with one surety with the additional condition of having to hand over his passport to the court.

He fixed Dec 17 for case mention. — Bernama

Woman held for illegally keeping birds

KOTA BHARU: The General Operations Force (GOF) confiscated three types of birds worth nearly RM40,000 that were kept without approval in Kampung Dusun Durian, Tawang in Bachok.

GOF Southeast Brigade Commander Datuk Nik Ros Azhan Ab Hamid said the seizure was carried out by members of the 7th GOF Battalion together with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks at a premises on Wednesday.

The inspection found that 11 White-rumped Shama (*Murai Batu*), one Loris Neck and seven Common Iora were kept at the premises without official storage documents from the wildlife department.

"A 25-year-old woman was arrested to assist in the investigations.

"The case is being investigated under the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010," said Nik Ros Azhan in a statement.

He added that the woman and the confiscated birds were taken to the Bachok district police headquarters for further action. — Bernama

No council nod for 'patriotic' rally

IPOH: Police have advised the public not to participate in a rally scheduled for tomorrow at Dataran Menara Condong, Teluk Intan, as the event has not received permission from the venue owner.

Hilir Perak district police chief ACP Ahmad Adnan Basri said the *Himpunan Patriotik Rakyat* rally did not obtain permission from the landowner, the Teluk Intan Municipal Council, as required under Section 11 of the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012.

He warned that strict action would be taken against anyone participating in the rally.

Ahmad Adnan said although police received a notification letter from the organisers on Monday, no permission was given by the venue owner.

"Police have also posted a notice regarding the programme (the rally) in the Menara Condong area to gather public feedback.

"We have also received feedback from the council, which denied permission due to the venue's unsuitability," he said in a statement. — Bernama

Random checks on UPNM cadets to detect abuse

➤ Move among prevention mechanisms to curb bullying incidents from occurring, says defence minister

KUALA LUMPUR: Regular physical examinations will be conducted on cadet officers of the Military Training Academy of the National Defence University of Malaysia (UPNM) to detect any abusive activities that may cause injury.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin said it is among eight improvement actions and prevention mechanisms that have been and are being taken to prevent incidents of bullying from happening again.

He said meeting between cadet officers and

top officials of the academy and the university will also be held exclusively to provide a free space without fear to obtain information on misconduct among cadet officers.

"This is to overcome the issue of cadet officers' reluctance to report inappropriate incidents," he said.

He was replying to Nordin Ahmad Ismail (PN-Lumut) regarding efforts to ensure bullying activities at the university are stopped during the minister's question time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Mohamed Khaled said the Armed Forces had also increased the staffing of officers and other ranks assigned to the academy and the university. Trainers are also added to increase monitoring of cadet officers, Bernama reported.

He said the Armed Forces also assigned a trainer on duty for each company to enable closer monitoring of cadet officers on a daily basis.

"Trainers on duty have been instructed to

patrol the accommodation of cadet officers after 11.59pm every day," he said, adding that action will be taken against cadet officers found guilty of abuse.

Starting from February 2023, seven closed-circuit cameras have been installed at several levels of accommodation blocks to detect suspicious activities, he said, adding that the ministry is planning to increase the number according to need and suitability.

Meanwhile, first-year cadet officers, who are the usual target of abuse, have been isolated at Bukit Putera since April, and are placed under full control of an instructor.

Mohamed Khaled said the cases of bullying reported in the academy only increased this year, while only one case each was recorded in 2022 and 2023.

The ministry will expose any forms of offences and impose severe punishments on bullies besides emphasising the seriousness of the offence of conspiring to hide bullying incidents in the academy, he added.

Don't fall for scammers' baits, tech grads told

MALACCA: Graduates with technology expertise, especially in information and communication, have been advised to exercise caution to avoid becoming victims of human trafficking syndicates or scammers looking to exploit their skills for criminal activities.

Bukit Aman Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Director Datuk Seri Mohd Shuhaily Mohd Zain said with technological advancements and the lure of attractive salaries, these individuals are increasingly at risk of being targeted.

"From my field research, we are dealing with more complex human trafficking cases. While these syndicates may not always need highly specialised skills, they do seek individuals with

at least basic knowledge of systems and telecommunications.

"Those with technology skills are also targeted," he said after officiating at the closing ceremony of the 2024 Atipsom Enforcement Seminar, themed "Awareness to Action: Mobilising Against Human Trafficking and People Smuggling", on Wednesday.

He also advised recent graduates from higher learning institutions to be wary of high-salary job offers, especially from overseas.

"On average, we know that entry-level salaries here range from RM1,500 to RM2,200, while scammers can offer between RM4,000 and RM5,000.

"For young job-seekers eager to start their

careers, this is understandably enticing, and these job ads often appear legitimate, offering positions like customer service or technical support without any indication of involvement in online gambling."

He said authorities have also found that some Malaysians have been unintentionally involved by encouraging friends to work abroad, especially young graduates who are unaware that they are being drawn into syndicate networks.

Mohd Shuhaily warned that job offers in countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos or Myanmar should be approached with caution and need to be thoroughly verified by job-seekers. — Bernama

Police detain three, seize drugs worth RM2mil



From left: Bukit Aman Deputy Narcotics Director (Intelligence/Operations) Datuk Zainuddin Ahmad, Khaw and Acting Perak Police Chief DCP Zulkaflī Sariaat with other officers showing the seized drugs at the police headquarters. — **BERNAMAPIC**

TANJUNG MALIM: Police detained three individuals, including a married couple, and seized more than 51kg of methamphetamine at the Slim Perdana Business Centre in Taman Sri Jaya near Slim River on Monday.

Bukit Aman Narcotics Crime Investigation Department (NCID) Director Datuk Seri Khaw Kok Chin said the arrests, made in collaboration with Perak and Perlis NCID, involved intercepting a rented Proton Preve at a parking lot at 3.35pm.

"Police apprehended two local men and one local woman, aged between 25 and 27, who served as transporters.

"They had concealed 50 plastic packets containing methamphetamine powder and crystal chunks inside suitcases in the car's trunk.

"The 51.97kg drugs seized are valued at about RM2 million," he said at the Muallim district police headquarters here yesterday.

He added that it is believed the syndicate smuggles drugs from a neighbouring country and distributes them to the Klang Valley market via land routes.

Khaw said investigations found that the first suspect, aged 25, was paid RM2,000 for each drug delivery, while the third suspect, aged 27, received RM100.

He added that the syndicate had been active since January.

The seized drugs could supply to about 260,000 drug users.

Khaw said the suspects have been remanded for a week until Nov 18 to assist in investigations under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952. — Bernama

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Move to prevent 'marine roadkill' involving dolphins

BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia needs to urgently implement a "boating code of conduct" to protect dolphins and other endangered mammal species before more of them wash up dead on our beaches, said a marine research and conservation NGO that studies mammals to enhance conservation and increase public awareness.

MareCet Research Organisation outreach and education coordinator Aizatul Jasmine Azizan said protecting the mammals requires urgent action to manage marine traffic.

"Implementing such a code of conduct for dolphins is important, especially in their hotspots such as Perlis, Kedah and Langkawi Island, where tour boats, ferries and shipping vessels are prevalent.

"The code of conduct would introduce safety measures like speed limits in high-risk areas, helping to reduce threats like noise pollution, collisions and boat strikes."

Additionally, she called for the establishment of protected areas in core marine mammal habitats and protected corridors.

She was commenting on an incident on Nov 10 in which a dolphin carcass was found on Teluk Bahang beach in Penang. It is believed to have died from injuries possibly caused by a ship collision, breaking free from a fishing net or while hunting for food in shallow waters.

Aizatul Jasmine said it has become increasingly common for carcasses to wash up on shores, including those of dolphins, porpoises and even dugongs (sea cows). At least three cases are reported annually, with many others going unreported.

She said one of the primary threats to dolphins is being caught as "bycatch", in which accidental entanglement in fishing nets results in serious injuries or even death.

"Dolphins often target the same fish that fishermen are after, so they may try to catch fish already trapped in the nets or simply feed in their natural grounds, which overlap with active fishing zones.

➤ NGO calls for boating speed limit guide at high risk areas to prevent noise pollution, collisions and boat strikes



A firefighter assisting a stranded dolphin to get back into deeper waters. Wan Mohd Syazwan said fishermen and boat operators should be trained to report sightings and strandings. —SUNPIC

"The impact goes beyond individual dolphins, as these incidents can affect their overall population and disrupt the balance of marine ecosystems."

Aizatul Jasmine said public and stakeholder support is critical, adding that nine out of 10 Malaysians are unaware that dolphins inhabit Malaysian waters.

University Putra Malaysia Department of Biology marine biologist Dr Wan Mohd Syazwan Wan Solahudin said public awareness about endangered species such as dolphins is relatively low, especially in rural coastal areas where the direct impact of marine conservation is less visible.

"Fishermen and boat operators should also be trained to report dolphin sightings and strandings while learning to avoid harmful practices that threaten their survival.

"Additionally, promoting dolphin-watching tours as a sustainable and eco-friendly activity can raise awareness and provide an economic incentive for conservation."

Wan Mohd Syazwan said dolphins in Malaysian waters are highly threatened by human activity, with plastic waste and

chemical pollutants posing serious risks to their health and reducing their ability to thrive in marine environments.

"As top predators, losing even one dolphin can throw the ecosystem off balance by allowing their prey numbers to grow unchecked.

"This can harm other species that are lower in the food chain and disrupt their hunting efficiency and reproductive success. In the long run, it could be harmful to dolphin biodiversity."

Wan Mohd Syazwan said while it is important to assist stranded or injured mammals, individuals should avoid approaching or touching them as this could cause further stress or injury.

"Immediately contacting the nearest fisheries authorities or active NGOs for assistance is best as under Malaysian law, marine mammals including dolphins are protected under Section 27 (3) of the Fisheries Act 1985."

The Act states that they are not allowed to be fished, disturbed, touched, captured, killed or taken. Offenders face a fine not exceeding RM5,000.

M'sian food draws crowds at China festival

BEIJING: *Nasi lemak*, *lontong*, *rendang* and *satay* were among the popular Malaysian dishes that drew crowds from various countries at the 2024 Malaysia Gastronomy Festival held here recently.

Nadia Jovita, 29, from Indonesia, expressed excitement at the opportunity to taste Malaysian cuisine, which she described as uniquely appealing.

"I've never had the chance to visit Malaysia. So I'm really happy to finally try some of the popular dishes at this festival. I really love *nasi lemak*, it's so delicious.

"The food here also reminds me of Indonesian dishes since we are neighbours. I hope this event can be held every year and that more people will be invited to try Malaysian cuisine," she said.

Approximately 300 people attended the event at the Shangri-La Hotel, where they tried over 50 types of Malaysian dishes, traditional cakes and fruits buffet-style while being entertained by traditional Malaysian songs.

The buffet included *nasi dagang*, *mamak mi goreng*, *fruit rojak*, *roti jala*, *roti canai*, *ais kacang*, Malaysian ice cream, *kuih ketayap* and *kuih koci*, Bemama reported.

Dhambhar Prasad Acharya, 30, from Nepal, described the food served at the event as delicious and was eager to try as much as possible.

"The range of dishes presented was both extensive and incredibly diverse, reflecting Malaysia's rich heritage and multicultural influences. From aromatic spices to intricate flavours, each dish offered a unique taste and a delightful culinary journey," he said, adding that he particularly enjoyed *lontong*.

Meanwhile, Aaliyah Martin, 25, a journalist from Dominica, said the festival was extraordinary, and she was thrilled to join Malaysians in experiencing and learning about their food and culture.

"If I had to describe it in one word, it would be 'exceptional.' The warmth of the Malaysian people was truly remarkable. They encouraged us to try so many different dishes. The food was amazing, well-seasoned and reminiscent of the flavours in the Caribbean. Although they were different, the tastes felt surprisingly familiar, reflecting the beauty of cultural connections."

Ambassador to China Datuk Norman Muhammad said the event successfully introduced Malaysia to foreign countries, especially China, allowing their people to better appreciate the country's food culture.

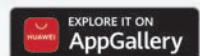
"This is part of our cultural diplomacy. I believe the best aspect to share is food. Malaysia has a rich and fascinating gastronomic tradition that deserves to be showcased. While some dishes may be found in other Asian countries, the way they are prepared and their flavours are distinctly different," he said, adding that he plans to highlight Malaysian Chinese cuisine at next year's festival.

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Churches, temples live-stream prayers for stressed-out exam parents

SEOUL: Nine-hour prayer sessions, live-streamed speaking in tongues, bowing before a Buddhist altar 108 times, South Korean parents are turning to God as students sat for a crucial exam yesterday.

The "Suneung" university entrance exam is a major event in the education-obsessed country, and officials take extreme measures, from rescheduling flights to pausing construction, to ensure students can give their best performance.

At a church in Seoul's wealthy Gangnam district, parents gathered for a nine-hour prayer marathon, with specific requests to God tailored around the structure of the multiple choice exam, which will be taken by 522,670 students this year.

"I was so nervous that I couldn't sleep last night but the praying session made me feel much better," said parent Kang Soo-jung, adding that she planned to stay for the entire event.

For the first session – Korean language – priests prayed for students to read clearly, and when it moved to maths, parents asked God for their children to perform smooth calculations.

At a church on the outskirts of Seoul, pastor Han Seung-woo was leading a prayer session for hundreds of parents. Many wept as he asked God to bless their test-taking offspring with "wisdom and courage".

"I shared my hopes that, regardless of whether students do well on the exam, parents can find reassurance in knowing that God is with them every step of the way," Han said.

Pastor Lee Chan-soo, who has held "Suneung prayer sessions" since 1992, said he tried to use the sessions to prepare parents to face any exam disappointments with equanimity.

"The Suneung isn't everything in life. It's just the start. They are still our loving children and God's children regardless of the test scores," he said.

At the Bongeunsa Buddhist temple, head monk Wonmyung comforted parents trying to help their children.

Some parents bowed 108 times before an altar to make wishes come true. "I know this is one of the most important days in a parent's life," Wonmyung said, adding that it was all about "praying so that (the students) have peace and calm in their minds".

For parents who were unable to pray in person, many churches and temples streamed the sessions live on YouTube.

Yoido Full Gospel Church, one of the largest churches in South Korea with about 480,000 members, is holding a YouTube live session for the duration of the exam, featuring gospel songs and the faithful speaking in tongues.

BTN, South Korea's largest Buddhist television channel, broadcast chants that parents can join from home.

If parents donate, their hopes for their child's exam results and the student's name will scroll across the screen. – AFP

Philippines will not block ICC in possible Duterte probe

Ex-president defends deadly anti-drug crackdown

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said yesterday his government would not block the International Criminal Court (ICC) if former leader Rodrigo Duterte wants to be investigated for alleged crimes against humanity in his anti-drugs crackdown.

The Philippines will not cooperate with the ICC but it has obligations with Interpol, Marcos told reporters.

"If that's the wish of (Duterte), we will not block ICC. We will not just cooperate.

"But if he agrees to be

investigated, it is up to him," Marcos said.

His remarks follow a marathon congressional hearing on Wednesday during which Duterte, president from 2016 to 2022, refused to apologise for his role in the bloodshed and urged the ICC to start its investigation.

Duterte remained defiant during Wednesday's hearing as he defended his drugs crackdown, which was a key plank of his election campaign, during which he had promised thousands of drug pushers and criminals would be killed.

"I have nothing to hide. What I did, I did it for my country and for the young people. No excuses. No apologies. If I go to hell, so be it," said the 79-year old Duterte at the hearing, which was also attended by families of drug war victims.

"I am already old, I might die soon. You might miss the pleasure of seeing me standing before the court hearing the judgment whatever it is," Duterte said, adding he assumed full responsibility for what happened.

All testimony provided by Duterte will be assessed to see their legal consequences, Marcos said.

Duterte unilaterally withdrew the Philippines as a member of the ICC in 2019 after it announced it had started a preliminary examination into thousands of killings in his anti-narcotics campaign.

He questioned its authority to conduct an investigation, and insisted during Wednesday's hearing it no longer has jurisdiction over the Philippines.

Marcos said the government was monitoring developments because

responsibility for the extrajudicial killings had not been established.

"And we had the mothers of some of the victims that were there, and up to now, they have not seen the justice for the murders of their children," he said.

Under Duterte, police said they killed 6,200 suspected dealers who had resisted arrest during their anti-drug operations.

But human rights groups believe the real toll to be far greater, with thousands more users and peddlers gunned down in mysterious circumstances by unknown assailants.

Authorities at the time said those were vigilante killings and drugs gangs eliminating rivals. Rights groups and some victims accuse police of systematic cover-ups and executions, which they deny.

– Reuters

Sri Lankans vote with economic reforms at stake

COLOMBO: Sri Lankans began voting yesterday in a snap election to decide if the island would give its new leftist president greater strength to help the poor as it recovers from a financial meltdown.

Just over 17 million Sri Lankans are eligible to elect lawmakers to the 225-member parliament for a five-year term. A record 690 political parties and independent groups are in the fray across 22 electoral districts.

"I think we are seeing the first signs of a positive political change in Sri Lanka after the president was elected and we should give him the

chance to continue that change," said Umeshi Perera, 32, who queued to vote in a Colombo suburb.

The president, Marxist-leaning Anura Kumara Dissanayake, 55, was elected in September but his National People's Power (NPP) coalition had just three of parliament's 225 seats, prompting him to dissolve it and seek a fresh mandate.

Voting was proceeding smoothly, a police spokesman said.

"The military is also on standby to assist the police but we do not expect any incidents," said the spokesman, Nihal Thalduwa.

Analysts say Dissanayake's coalition is expected to draw significant support, while a victory for a rival could lead to a policy logjam the country cannot afford.

A political outsider in a country dominated by family parties, Dissanayake backs policies to fight poverty, such as bigger welfare schemes, as well as battle graft.

Sri Lanka typically backs its president in general elections, especially if they are held in quick succession.

The president wields executive power but Dissanayake still requires a parliamentary majority to appoint

a fully-fledged Cabinet and deliver on key election promises to cut taxes, support local businesses and fight poverty.

"This election is critical as it is a test for the NPP to get the numbers needed for the IMF package and to take forward promised governance, constitutional and economic reforms," said Bhavani Fonseka, a researcher at Colombo's Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The main challenger to Dissanayake's coalition is the Samagi Jana Balawegaya party of opposition leader Sajith Premadasa, who favours a mix of interventionist and free-market economic policies.

Also a key contender is the New Democratic Front, backed by former president Ranil Wickremesinghe.

A nation of 22 million just across the southern tip of India, Sri Lanka was crushed by a 2022 economic crisis triggered by a severe shortage of foreign currency that caused its economy to shrink by 7.3% in 2022 and 2.3% last year.

Boosted by a US\$2.9 billion (RM13 billion) bailout programme from the International Monetary Fund, the economy has begun a tentative recovery, but the high cost of living is still a critical issue for many voters, especially the poor.

"In September people gave us victory," Dissanayake said on Sunday near the end of campaigning.

"The next task is to unite people from the four corners of this country and build a powerful people's movement." – Reuters



Dissanayake leaves a polling station after casting his ballot in Colombo yesterday. – AFP/IC

Flights to Bali resume following volcanic eruptions

JAKARTA: Several airlines resumed flights to Bali yesterday, after cancelling trips to and from the resort island due to huge eruptions at a nearby volcano.

Eighty-three international routes were cancelled on Wednesday, Bali's international airport general manager Ahmad Syaugi Shahab said

in a statement after Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki spewed a 9km tower of ash.

The volcano has erupted more than a dozen times over the last two weeks, killing at least nine people and forcing the evacuation of thousands.

Qantas and Jetstar were resuming their services to Bali, Australia's Qantas Group said.

Two delayed Qantas flights from yesterday were among those set to take off.

"We will continue to monitor the changing conditions and volcanic activity," it said in the statement.

AirAsia planned to resume some flights to and from Bali yesterday, the company said, while Virgin Australia

said it would resume flights to and from Denpasar starting today.

Singapore's Scoot airline said it had rescheduled flights from Singapore to Bali and Surabaya as well as their return flights due to Lewotobi Laki-Laki's volcanic activity.

The airport in the tourist hotspot of Labuan Bajo near the volcano

reopened yesterday.

Ahmad Syaugi Shahab said volcanic ash from Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki had been heading away from the airport since Wednesday evening. The volcano erupted again yesterday and a thick ash column and lava flows could be seen pouring from its crater. – AFP

New Zealand parliament debates contentious rights Bill

SYDNEY: New Zealand's parliament yesterday began a heated debate on a contentious Bill aimed at reinterpreting the country's founding agreement as hundreds of protesters continued their march towards the country's capital.

The ACT New Zealand party, a junior partner in the country's centre-right coalition government, last week unveiled the Bill which aims to define the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

First signed in 1840 between the British Crown and more than 500 Maori chiefs, it lays down how the two parties agreed to govern. The interpretation of clauses in the document still guides legislation and policy today.

The proposed Bill passed its first reading yesterday and will now be sent to a select committee.

Associate Justice Minister David Seymour said the Maori are being given different rights than non-

indigenous citizens, who lose out because of policies specifically designed for the uplift of Maori.

Seymour said people who oppose the Bill want to "stir up" fear and division.

"My mission is to empower every person," he said.

The legislation, however, is seen by many Maori and their supporters as undermining the rights of the Maori, who make up around 20% of the population of 5.3 million.

Hundreds have set out on a nine-day march, or *hiko*, from New Zealand's north to the national capital of Wellington in protest over the legislation, staging rallies in towns and cities as they move south.

Introduced by Seymour's ACT New Zealand party, which won 8.6% of the vote in last year's election, the Bill is expected to fail.

Coalition partners the National Party and New Zealand First, are only supporting the legislation through

the first of three readings as part of the coalition agreement. Both parties have said they will not support it to become legislation.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said his government's top focus will be on the economy and improving law and order.

"You do not go negate, with a single stroke of a pen, 184 years of debate and discussion, with a Bill that I think is very simplistic," he said. – Reuters

World's largest coral found near Solomon Islands

➤ Standalone structure is longer than a blue whale

SYDNEY: Scientists say they have found the world's largest coral near the Pacific's Solomon Islands, announcing yesterday a major discovery "pulsing with life and colour".

The coral is so immense that researchers sailing the crystal waters of the Solomon archipelago initially thought they had stumbled across a hulking shipwreck.

"Just when we think there is nothing left to discover on planet earth, we find a massive coral made of nearly one billion little polyps, pulsing with life and colour," said marine ecologist Enric Sala.

The standalone structure had been growing for some 300 years, the researchers said, formed from a "complex network" of tiny coral polyps.

It was distinct from a coral reef, which is made from many distinct coral colonies, they explained.

Measuring 34m wide and 32m long, the team said the "mega coral" was three times bigger than the previous record holder – a coral dubbed "Big Momma" in American Samoa.

"While Big Momma looked like a huge scoop of ice cream plopped down on the reef, this newly discovered coral is as if the ice cream started to melt, spreading forever along the seafloor," said lead scientist Molly Timmers.

It was longer than a blue whale and was thought to be "so colossal" that it could "be seen from space".

The coral was discovered at the southeastern tip of the Solomon Islands in an area known as the Three Sisters.



The complex network of tiny coral polyps pulses with life and colour. – AFP/PIIC

It was spotted by a National Geographic team embarking on a scientific expedition in the region.

Hotter and more acidic oceans have drained the life from corals in many of the region's tropical waters, including Australia's famed Great Barrier Reef.

But this latest discovery offered a small glimmer of hope, the research team said.

"While the nearby shallow reefs were degraded due to warmer seas, witnessing this large healthy coral oasis in slightly deeper waters is a beacon of hope," said coral scientist Eric Brown.

The lush rainforests and pristine waters of Solomon Islands have long been celebrated for their ecological diversity.

Wildlife observations made in Solomon Islands in the 1920s helped prove a key part of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

"There is so much to learn about the richness of marine life and the ocean ecosystem, but this finding opens doors of knowledge," said top Solomon Islands official Collin Beck.

"More scientific research is needed to better understand our rich biodiversity and our planet." – AFP

Toxic smog hides Taj Mahal, delays flights

NEW DELHI: Toxic smog obscured India's famed monument to love, the Taj Mahal, as well as Sikhism's holiest shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, and delayed flights yesterday, becoming too thick to see through in several places.

The city of Lahore in Pakistan ranked as the world's most polluted in winter's annual scourge across the region, worsened by dust, emissions, and smoke from fires burnt illegally in India's farming states of Punjab and Haryana.

In the city of Agra, the Taj Mahal was barely visible from the gardens in front of the 17th-century monument, while dense fog wreathed worshippers at the Golden Temple in Punjab.

Delhi flights faced delays, with tracking website Flightradar24 showing 88% of departures and 54% of arrivals were delayed.

Officials blamed high pollution, combined with humidity, becalmed winds and a drop in temperature for the smog, which cut visibility to 300m at the city's international airport, which diverted flights in zero visibility on Wednesday.

More patients flocked to hospitals, particularly children.

"There has been a sudden increase in children with allergies, cough and cold ... and a rise in acute asthma attacks," said Sahab Ram, a paediatrician in Punjab's Fazilka region.

Delhi's minimum temperature fell to 16.1°C

yesterday from 17°C the previous day, weather officials said.

Its pollution ranked in the "severe" category for the second consecutive day, with a score of 430 on an index of air quality maintained by the top pollution panel that rates a score of zero to 50 as "good".

Pollution in New Delhi is likely to stay in the "severe" category today, the Earth Sciences Ministry said, before improving to "very poor", or an index score of 300 to 400.

The number of farm fires to clear fields in northern India has risen steadily this week to almost 2,300 on Wednesday from 1,200 on Monday, the ministry's website showed. – Reuters

Man on trial over 'pink cocaine' import

SYDNEY: A man has been charged after allegedly attempting to import 252kg of a dangerous illicit drug cocktail into Australia.

Federal Police said the seized substance, known as "pink cocaine" or "tusi", is a mix of ketamine, MDMA, and other adulterants, and typically contains little to no cocaine.

Police launched an investigation last month following the discovery of the drug in an air cargo consignment, which was labelled as containing an industrial saw and destined for a western Sydney suburb.

The 21-year-old man was arrested early this month.

The man has been charged with attempting to possess a commercial quantity of unlawfully imported border-controlled drugs, police said, a crime carrying a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

He appeared in court last week, where bail was formally refused. His next court appearance is scheduled for January.

Acting Superintendent Stuart Millen expressed concern over the size of the seizure, warning of the significant risks to users.

"Pink cocaine is made up of an unpredictable cocktail of illicit drugs, meaning anyone who consumes the drug has no idea what they are putting in their body. It rarely contains cocaine," Millen said.

"The dangers of all illicit drug consumption can be severe, including loss of consciousness, stroke, heart attack and even death." – Bernama

BRIEFS

JAPAN KEEPS DEATH PENALTY FOR HEINOUS CRIMES

TOKYO: The Japanese government does not plan to open a discussion on abolishing the death penalty. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said: "The majority of the public believes that the death penalty is inevitable for extremely heinous crimes. Murder of many people, murder for robbery – these heinous crimes are still not a thing of the past, the death penalty is inevitable for those who have committed such vicious offences. The government does not consider it appropriate to abolish the death penalty at this time and will not open a debate on it." In Japanese judicial practice, the death penalty is usually applied in cases of multiple murders, and there are about 10 such sentences each year. – Bernama

RESCUERS RETURN BEACHED ORCA TO SEA

MOSCOW: Russian rescuers returned a young female killer whale to the Sea of Okhotsk yesterday after the orca beached in the far east. Video released by the Emergency Situations Ministry showed a killer whale beached on snowy sand, but breathing and making calls as residents lifted her towards the sea. "The whale was in a serious condition, there were already cracks on the skin. People watered her with seawater, and dug a small channel from the sea." Orcas belong to the sub-order of toothed whales but are also the largest member of the dolphin family. – Reuters

Six Israeli troops killed, Beirut suburbs hit again

UN condemns attacks on peacekeepers

TEL AVIV: Israel suffered one of the deadliest days of its ground offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon on Wednesday when six of its soldiers were killed in combat near the border.

The soldiers "fell during combat in southern Lebanon", the army said in a statement. Their deaths mean 47 Israeli troops have been killed in combat with Hezbollah since Sept 30, when Israel sent ground forces into Lebanon.

The army's announcement came after new Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said there would be no easing up in the war against Hezbollah.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shared on X an image of the "Golani" Brigade symbol - the unit the soldiers killed belonged to - a green olive tree against a yellow background, with a broken heart emoji.

Israeli forces launched airstrikes on Beirut for a third consecutive day yesterday, hitting locations in the capital's southern suburbs early in the morning after a night of heavy bombardments.

Plumes of smoke rose over Beirut as the strikes continued, while raids also reached southern Lebanon's Bint Jbeil, where overnight airstrikes and artillery shelling inflicted heavy damage on buildings and residential complexes, according to Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA).

Five people were killed in airstrikes on the towns of Bazourieh and Jumayimah, NNA reported.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said Israeli attacks have killed at least 3,365 people and wounded 14,344 across Lebanon since Oct 7.

Ali Hassan Khalil, the political aide to Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, said on Wednesday that Lebanese negotiators reached a preliminary

understanding with US envoy Amos Hochstein on a framework for a ceasefire.

Ali said this proposal was conveyed to the Israeli side through Hochstein, though Lebanon had yet to receive any response or suggested amendments from Israel.

He said any potential deal must be firmly based on UN Resolution 1701, adopted in 2006, to help the Lebanese army keep its southern border area with Israel free of weapons or armed personnel other than those of the Lebanese state.

Ali said Lebanon had no

objection to US or French participation in overseeing ceasefire compliance.

Hezbollah said on Wednesday it had fired ballistic missiles at the Israeli army's headquarters in Tel Aviv, which also houses the Defence Ministry.

The Israeli army said it had intercepted some of the "five projectiles".

Hezbollah also claimed responsibility for firing missiles at "enemy army forces" in northern Israel just before midnight.

The UN Security Council has condemned attacks on the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, calling on all parties to respect the safety of the Blue Helmets.

"Peacekeepers must never be the target of an attack," the council said in a statement.

In Gaza, Hamas allies the Palestinian Islamic Jihad released a video on Wednesday of an Israeli hostage held in the strip, who identified himself as Sasha Trupanov.

Trupanov's mother, Lena, in a statement published by the Hostage and Missing Families Forum campaign group, urged the hostages' immediate release, saying: "They have no time left."

The Health Ministry in Gaza said at least 43,712 people have been killed in more than 13 months of war between Israel and Hamas. - AFP/Reuters



Affected residents console each other as they stand on the rubble of damaged buildings in the aftermath of Israeli strikes in Joun village in the Chouf district, Lebanon. - REUTERS/PIC

'Evacuation orders amount to war crime'

TEL AVIV: Human Rights Watch said in a report released yesterday that Israel's repeated evacuation orders in Gaza amount to the "war crime of forcible transfer", and to "ethnic cleansing" in parts of the territory.

"Human Rights Watch has amassed evidence that Israeli officials are ... committing the war crime of forcible transfer," the report said.

"Israel's actions appear to also meet the definition of ethnic cleansing" in the areas where Palestinians will not be able to return, HRW said.

Nadia Hardman, an HRW researcher, noted the 172-page report's findings are based on interviews with displaced Gazans, satellite imagery and public reporting conducted until August.

Although Israel says the displacement is justified for civilians' safety or by military imperatives,

Hardman said that "Israel cannot simply rely on the presence of armed groups to justify the displacement of civilians".

"Israel would have to demonstrate in every instance that displacement of civilians was the only option", to fully comply with international humanitarian law.

According to the United Nations, 1.9 million Palestinians were displaced in Gaza as of last month. Before the start of the war on Oct 7 last year, the official population figure for the territory was 2.4 million inhabitants.

"Systematically rendering large parts of Gaza uninhabitable ... in some cases permanently ... amounts to ethnic cleansing," said Ahmed Benchemsi, spokesman for HRW's Middle East division.

The HRW report pointed in particular to the Philadelphi and Netzarim corridors, running along

the Egyptian border and cutting Gaza along its east-west axis respectively, which have been "razed, extended, and cleared", by Israel's army to create buffer zones and security corridors.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly insisted that Israeli forces must retain long-term control over the Philadelphi Corridor.

Hardman said Israeli forces have turned the central Netzarim corridor, between Gaza City and Wadi Gaza, into a buffer zone 4km wide mostly cleared of buildings.

The report excludes developments in the war since August, particularly an intense Israeli offensive in northern Gaza since early last month.

The operation has forced the displacement of at least 100,000 people from the Palestinian territory's far north to Gaza City and

surrounding areas, said UN Palestinian refugee agency spokeswoman Louise Wateridge.

Ragheb al-Rubaiya, a 63-year-old Palestinian from north Gaza's Jabalia Camp, said that he had been driven from his home after "bombing started from the air and the tanks, and they drove us out".

"They're destroying everything in Jabalia, and the goal is clear even to the blind: to wipe out the north and cut it off from Gaza," Ragheb said.

HRW's report argued "the actions of the Israeli authorities in Gaza are the actions of one ethnic or religious group to remove Palestinians, another ethnic or religious group, from areas within Gaza by violent means".

It pointed to the organised nature of the displacement, and the intention for Israeli forces to ensure affected areas will "remain permanently emptied". - AFP

French minister to shun COP29

PARIS: France's Environment Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher said she will stay away from the COP29 climate change conference in Baku after "unacceptable" attacks by Azerbaijan's president Ilham Aliyev.

Ilham had accused France of "crimes" and "human rights violations" in overseas territories including New Caledonia in the south Pacific, where 13 people have been killed this year in protests that broke out in May over a contested voting reform.

"Ilham's words against France and Europe as the COP29 opened in Baku are unacceptable," Pannier-Runacher told the French Senate.

Ilham on Wednesday accused France of holding Mediterranean island Corsica and Paris's far-flung overseas island territories "under the colonial yoke".

Azerbaijan has played host to a group of pro-independence movements from French overseas territories in an apparent bid to needle Paris, which has long supported Baku's arch-rival Armenia.

Ilham had on Tuesday called oil and gas "a gift of the God" in his COP opening address.

Pannier-Runacher hoped to spotlight a "positive dynamic" at the conference in petrostate Azerbaijan, where Brazil and Britain announced new emissions targets.

"France's negotiating teams will spare no effort to protect the planet and our populations," she said.

"We will argue for the implementation of the Paris Accord." - AFP

BRIEFS

TAJIKISTAN LOST 1,000 GLACIERS

DUSHNABE: More than 1,000 glaciers have disappeared in Tajikistan over the last three decades. The thousands of glaciers across mountainous Central Asia are crucial to the region's food and water security, typically draining fresh water into rivers to replenish them. Energy and Water Resources Minister Daler Juma said: "Over the past 30 years, out of 14,000 glaciers in Tajikistan, more than 1,000 glaciers of vital importance to the region have disappeared. The rapid melting of glaciers is a serious threat in the global context of protecting water resources." UN scientists say glaciers could disappear from Central Asia by the end of the century. - AFP

IRAN READY TO TALK TO NUCLEAR AGENCY

DUBAI: Iran is willing to resolve disputes with the UN nuclear agency over its compliance with safeguards but will not do so under pressure, its foreign minister said after meeting the International Atomic Energy Agency head yesterday. European powers are pushing for a new resolution against Iran by the agency next week to pressure Tehran over what they view as its poor cooperation. Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said: "The ball is in the EU court. We are willing to negotiate based on our national interest and inalienable rights." - Reuters

**Under One Roof**

Q: Our two daughters, ages 13 and seven, argue and bicker constantly. We have talked to them many times about the importance of being kind, loving and forgiving, and they always promise to do better but nothing seems to change. How can we help them overcome this sibling rivalry?

Focus on the Family Malaysia: Most families deal with sibling conflict at some point and usually at the most inconvenient times. Resolving this rivalry takes consistency, patience and time. Keep these three things in mind as you work through it:

➔ **Stay calm:** Dealing with bickering children can feel like “ninja-level” parenting. Take a deep breath and remind yourself that you are teaching them essential skills for handling relationships and resolving conflicts – skills they will need throughout life. It is important to take time to understand each daughter’s perspective, keeping in mind their ages and personalities.

➔ **Listen and teach:** Listen carefully to your children, help them identify the real issue, and involve them in finding solutions and setting consequences. For example, you could set up a system where, after five minutes of arguing, they can hire a parent for RM1 per minute to help them resolve the conflict.

Encourage them to take turns listening, practise empathy (“What is it like to be with me?”), and ask themselves, “What do I really

Strategies for managing sibling conflict

want?” These exercises can teach them to self-reflect and consider the other person’s perspective. It will not always be perfect, but developing these skills takes time, and it will be a challenge for everyone.

➔ **Provide consistent limits:** If the children are being rude, mean or physical, it is important to intervene with consequences.

For example, we have heard of families where the child acting as a bully has to clean the toilets, symbolising that the issue needs to be “flushed out” of the home.

There are many other options for consequences as well, such as time-outs or losing privileges or toys – though these should come with the opportunity to earn them back.

Q: My wife and I don’t argue frequently, but when we do, things tend to escalate quickly. I think we are both to blame – one of us says something snarky, and the other responds

with something angrier or louder, which just makes it worse. How can we prevent this from escalating and handle conflicts more calmly?

Focus on the Family Malaysia: Most couples have experienced this – escalating a disagreement without meaning to. A relationship expert I once heard called it “climbing the crazy ladder”.

The idea is that fighting as a couple is like climbing an emotional ladder. It is easy to go up quickly, but coming down is much harder. Once an argument heats up, it becomes much more difficult to calm things down.

Additionally, the higher you go, the more unstable things become. When a disagreement escalates, it only makes it harder to resolve the issue constructively.

Couples are encouraged to avoid climbing the ladder for the sake of their marriage and, if they have children, for their well-being.

Research shows that children exposed to chronic, poorly handled conflict can suffer lifelong emotional consequences.

The best advice is to avoid climbing the crazy ladder in the first place. Instead, focus on staying calm, discussing differences rationally, and finding solutions that strengthen your relationship rather than weaken it.

A good first step will be to simply acknowledge it: “Honey, we are climbing the crazy ladder again.”

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

COMMENT by Christopher Lockyear

Place health at the core of climate change policy

AS leaders gather for the 29th Climate Conference (COP29) in Azerbaijan, they must face the reality that the climate crisis is also a health crisis for millions of the most vulnerable people on our increasingly warmer planet.

To respond effectively, it is crucial to place health at the centre of discussions, policies and funding decisions while also drawing lessons from insights in Southeast Asia.

My colleagues at Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) work in some of the most climate-vulnerable regions, serving populations who already lack access to basic healthcare or are deliberately excluded from it.

The climate crisis is hitting them the hardest. We see this firsthand, with more and more people seeking care in our clinics. We can see how failures in climate action are creating ripple effects that are worsening healthcare outcomes in humanitarian settings.

Adamo Armando Palame, an MSF health promotion supervisor in Mozambique explains it this way: “Those who wonder what climate change looks like should come to Mozambique. We are bearing the brunt of actions by the world’s most polluting countries. We now have malaria all year round and we are struck by cyclone after cyclone.”

Climate change increases the risk of illnesses for vulnerable populations, both directly – through harm from extreme weather events or the spread of vector-borne, waterborne and human-to-human communicable diseases – and indirectly, by eroding social and economic coping mechanisms such as livelihoods, healthcare systems and access to water and sanitation.

Communities most at risk often have the least capacity to adapt to the complex and compounding impacts of climate change while humanitarian responses to their growing needs become increasingly challenging.

In South Sudan, an MSF team observed how unpredictable seasonal patterns and rains forced a usually sedentary community into semi-nomadism for survival, complicating the roll-out of a three round multiantigen vaccination campaign.

Most of the 25 countries most vulnerable to climate change and least equipped to adapt are

also affected by armed conflict.

Recent analysis by the Peace Research Institute Oslo shows that state-based armed conflict is at its highest level in 30 years. With ongoing wars in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gaza, Myanmar, Nigeria, Russia and Ukraine, Somalia, Sudan and Syria, this portends more suffering.

Conflict instability and the politicisation of healthcare are compounding factors for communities already at risk from climate-driven disasters, as they struggle with inadequate infrastructure and limited preparedness and response capacity.

In 2023, *Cyclone Mocha* – the largest to hit Myanmar in a decade – made landfall in Rakhine state, where many people have been internally displaced by ongoing conflict and are living in temporary shelters.

Before the cyclone hit, thousands of people were already grappling with severe seasonal water shortages. Skin diseases, caused by lack of clean water for washing, accounted for 20% of our patient consultations during the dry season.

The cyclone damaged essential infrastructure, and the contamination of the already limited water supply quickly followed.

My MSF colleagues prioritised preventing waterborne diseases, distributing drinking water to 9,000 people per week and repairing damaged latrines and water systems.

We also resumed our pre-disaster activities, including mobile primary health clinics and emergency medical referrals. But the response was only a fraction of what was needed and what could have been done. Why?

Weeks after the cyclone, travel authorisations were still blocked, and when they were eventually granted, they were limited to activities pre-approved by military authorities.

The military then demanded that aid groups hand over relief supplies for their own distribution, violating the principles of impartiality and neutrality in humanitarian assistance.

In the past two years alone, my colleagues have responded to widespread flooding in Africa’s Sahel region and parts of Asia, severe tropical cyclones in Madagascar and Mozambique, and relentless heat and drought that have pushed millions to the brink of starvation in Somalia and Ethiopia.

During the same period, we also responded to concurrent cholera outbreaks in more than 10 countries where poor access to clean water, inadequate sanitation and weak healthcare infrastructure were exacerbated by rising temperatures and intensifying cycles of floods and drought.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 35 countries experienced cholera outbreaks in 2023 – 13% more than in 2022.

A deadly combination of malaria and malnutrition has kept our paediatric wards full across the Sahel region. In Chad, our teams now provide year-round prevention and treatment for malnutrition, instead of only during the seasonal peaks as we did before.

From Niger to Mozambique, and from Honduras to Bangladesh, we are treating more patients for malaria and dengue as the vectors of these diseases – mosquitoes – adapt to new environmental conditions and migrate to previously unaffected areas due to climate change. This exposes more people to infection for longer periods.

Dengue is the most common and particularly concerning. Today, over 3.9 billion people are estimated to be at risk, with that number likely to increase by another billion by 2050, according to the WHO.

Dengue is already endemic in Southeast Asia, and MSF has successfully replicated some of the innovative vector-control methods trialled in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam in other regions.

In Honduras, where more than 10,000 cases of dengue are reported annually, the transmission potential has increased significantly, and MSF teams have responded to seven outbreaks in the past 14 years.

Traditional chemical vector-control methods are less effective now; mosquitoes have become resistant to them.

Last year, MSF and the Honduras Health Ministry launched new vector-control studies, including a pilot of the Wolbachia method, similar to those conducted in Singapore and Southeast Asia. The mosquito population in a district of Tegucigalpa is being replaced with mosquitoes inoculated with the Wolbachia bacteria that blocks dengue viruses from replicating and helps reduce transmission.

Previous studies in other endemic areas have shown that Wolbachia can reduce dengue transmission by up to 95%. The method appears to be environmentally safe, self-sustaining and cost-effective.

I hope that trialling practical solutions in Southeast Asia, in ways that humanitarian groups like MSF can replicate elsewhere, becomes a hallmark of the future humanitarian landscape. This region has the potential to offer solutions for areas where institutions are often weaker or less reliable. Such efforts would be a powerful expression of solidarity through concrete action.

Other steps should include producing and sharing knowledge to fill gaps. An MSF review of the latest assessment reports by the authoritative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlighted that meningitis, snakebite, leishmaniasis, measles, Ebola and human African trypanosomiasis – all climate-sensitive diseases and humanitarian health problems – were under-reported or absent in the latest edition.

While health does not feature prominently in international decision-making processes, it urgently needs to be at the centre of all multilateral climate negotiations, policies, commitments and action. This means bringing health organisations and stakeholders to the negotiating table. Southeast Asia can also play a significant role.

Finally, coherence on planning for and responding to climate health emergencies is essential since efforts still often remain siloed, with little coordination and coherence across sectors – perhaps most of all, in terms of funding.

A key focus of COP29 will fall on finance, and we already see some countries choosing to cut humanitarian funding and divert that money to climate programming. This should not be.

Coherent climate action must fill gaps and enhance humanitarian and development assistance, not be set up to compete with it.

Christopher Lockyear is the secretary general of international medical humanitarian organisation Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com



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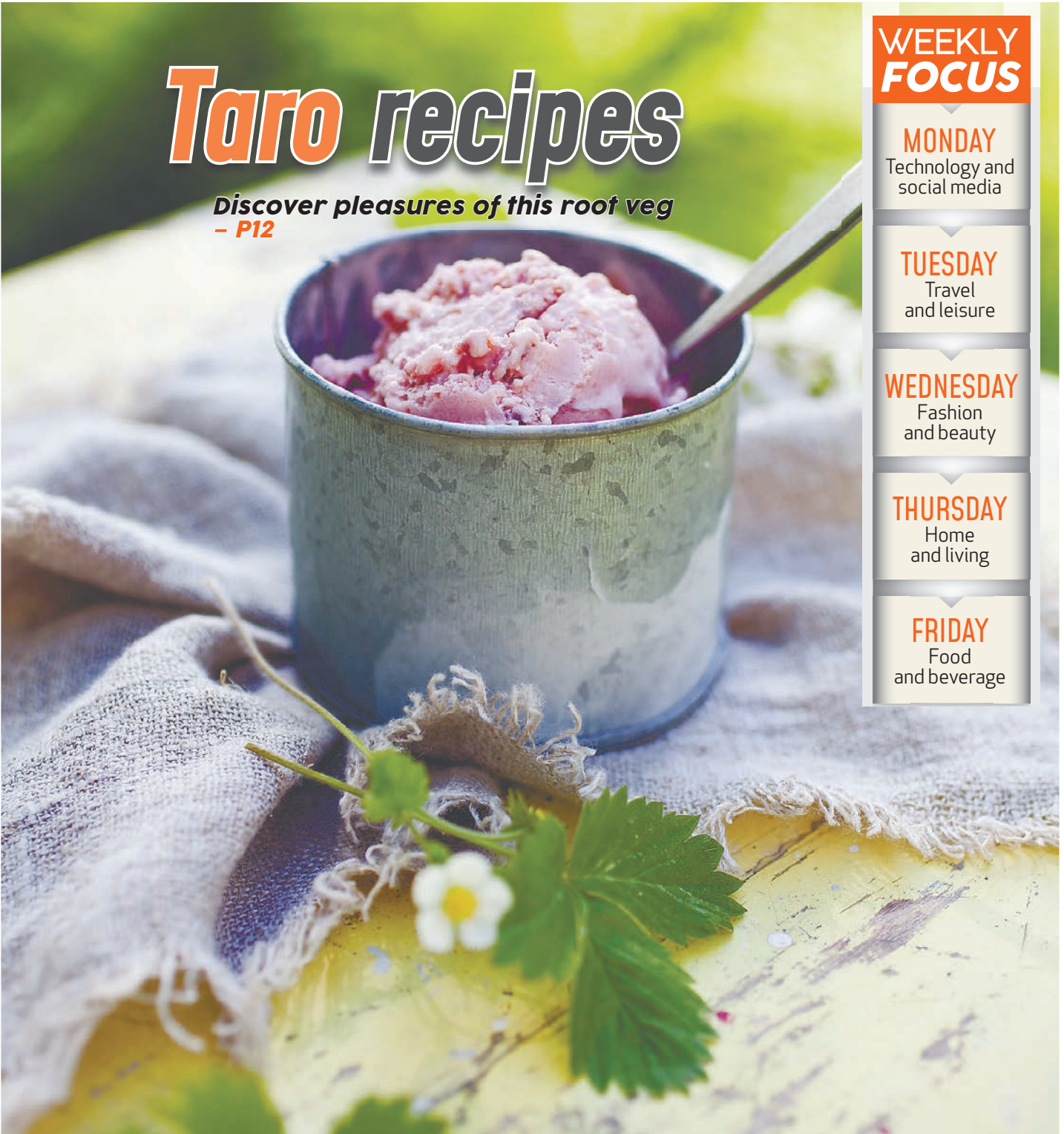
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Taro recipes

Discover pleasures of this root veg
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Tasty root veg

Seven recipes highlighting flavours, varieties of taro

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

TARO, a starchy root vegetable, is a beloved ingredient in many Asian and tropical cuisines. Its creamy texture and mildly sweet, nutty taste make it a good choice for sweet and savoury dishes. Not only does it bring distinctive flavours to the table but it is also packed with nutrients, offering fibre, vitamins and antioxidants.

Taro can elevate any meal with its smooth texture either in snacks, desserts or main dishes. Here are seven creative ways to cook with taro at home.



Taro chips are light and crunchy.

Taro chips

For a healthier snack alternative, try making taro chips. They are crispy and ideal for munching anytime.

Ingredients

- 2 medium-sized taro roots
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- Salt to taste
- Paprika or garlic powder (optional)

Instructions

1. Peel the taro roots and slice them thinly.
2. Toss the slices in olive oil, ensuring even coating.
3. Arrange the slices on a baking tray and season with salt or spices.
4. Bake at 180°C for 15 - 20 minutes or until golden and crisp.
5. Let cool and enjoy as a snack.



Taro coconut sago is a sweet and creamy dessert. - PIC FROM YOUTUBE @PRESSURE COOK

Taro coconut sago

This comforting taro coconut sago dessert combines the earthiness of taro with the richness of coconut milk for a comforting bowl.

Ingredients

- 2 cups of taro (peeled and diced)
- ½ cup of small sago pearls
- 1 cup of coconut milk
- ½ cup of water
- 4 tablespoon of sugar (adjust to taste)
- 1 - 2 pandan leaves (optional, for fragrance)
- A pinch of salt

Instructions

1. Boil water in a pot and add the sago pearls. Stir continuously to prevent clumping.
2. Cook for about 10 - 12 minutes until the sago turns translucent then drain and rinse under cold water. Set aside.
3. Steam or boil the diced taro until soft and tender (about 10 - 15 minutes).
4. In a pot, add coconut milk, water, pandan leaves and sugar. Heat on low, stirring occasionally.
5. Add the steamed taro and cooked sago pearls. Mix well.
6. Add a pinch of salt to balance the sweetness.
7. Let the dessert simmer for five to seven minutes until well combined and fragrant.
8. Remove the pandan leaves before serving.
9. Enjoy warm or chilled, depending on your preference.



Taro mochi recipe features a soft, chewy mochi dough wrapped around a rich taro filling.

Taro mochi

This chewy Japanese treat made with taro paste offers a sweet twist to the traditional mochi recipe.

Ingredients

- 1 cup of glutinous rice flour
- ½ cup of taro paste
- ½ cup of water
- ¼ cup of sugar
- Cornflour for dusting

Instructions

1. Mix glutinous rice flour, water and sugar until smooth.
2. Microwave the mixture for two minutes, stirring halfway.
3. Once thickened, knead the dough with cornflour.
4. Divide the dough into small balls, flatten and fill with taro paste.
5. Roll the filled mochi and dust with cornflour.

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The taro fries is slightly sweet in flavour. - PIC FROM YOUTUBE @FULL OF PLANTS

Taro fries with spicy mayo

Switch up your usual fries with taro for a crispy twist, paired with a spicy mayo dip.

Ingredients

- 2 large-sized taro roots
- 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- Salt to taste
- ¼ cup of mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon of sriracha

Instructions

1. Peel and cut taro into fries.
2. Heat oil in a pan and fry the taro until golden and crisp.
3. Drain on paper towels and sprinkle with salt.
4. Mix mayonnaise and sriracha for a dipping sauce.
5. Serve hot with the spicy mayo dip



Taro milk tea is a sweet purple drink made with taro root. - PICS FROM PINTEREST

Taro milk tea

This popular drink features taro's creamy sweetness blended with milk and chewy tapioca pearls.

Ingredients

- ½ cup of taro paste
- 2 cups of milk
- 1 tablespoon of sugar (optional)
- ¼ cup cooked of tapioca pearls
- Ice cubes

Instructions

1. Blend taro paste, milk and sugar until smooth.
2. Add tapioca pearls to a glass.
3. Pour the taro mixture over ice cubes.
4. Stir well and enjoy with a wide straw.



Taro makes a tasty combo in desserts such as this cake. - PIC FROM YOUTUBE @ROSIE BETTY

Taro cake

A beloved dim sum dish, taro cake is a savoury delight with a soft, dense texture, often pan-fried to golden perfection.

Ingredients

- 2 cups of taro (peeled and diced)
- 1 cup of rice flour
- ½ cup of water
- 1 teaspoon of five-spice powder
- ¼ cup of dried shrimp (optional)
- 2 tsp of vegetable oil
- Salt to taste

Instructions

1. Steam the diced taro until tender.
2. In a bowl, mix rice flour, water, five-spice powder and salt into a smooth batter.
3. Stir in the cooked taro and dried shrimp.
4. Pour the mixture into a greased pan and steam for 30 - 40 minutes.
5. Let the cake cool, slice it and pan-fry the pieces until golden on both sides.
6. Serve with soy sauce or chilli oil on the side.



Taro ice cream is a classic and popular flavour among Asians. - PIC FROM YOUTUBE @YUMMI HOMECOOK

Taro ice cream

Creamy, refreshing and slightly nutty, taro ice cream is a unique dessert ideal for hot days.

Ingredients

- 1 cup of taro paste
- 2 cups of heavy cream
- 1 cup of condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
- Purple food colouring (optional)

Instructions

1. Whip heavy cream until soft peaks form.
2. Gently fold in condensed milk, taro paste and vanilla extract.
3. Add a drop of food colouring if you want a vibrant purple hue.
4. Transfer the mixture into a container and freeze for four to six hours.
5. Scoop and serve your homemade taro ice cream.

These taro-based recipes showcase the root's ability to shine in a variety of dishes, from crispy fries to soothing soups and indulgent desserts. Try these recipes at home and discover the magic of taro.



M'sia set to become SE Asia's packaging for manufacturing hub: Reed Exhibitions

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is expected to become Southeast Asia's packaging for manufacturing hub within 10 years, said Reed Exhibitions (RX) China chief operating officer Josephine Lee.

Lee said that with strategic changes in the global manufacturing industry, Southeast Asia has become one of the most dynamic and promising regions for economic development.

"Malaysia, as a key player in the Southeast Asian packaging market, is experiencing significant growth and transformation, particularly in the food and beverage, e-commerce, and healthcare sectors.

"The Southeast Asian packaging market is expected to see rapid growth, with the regional gross domestic product forecast to expand by 4.7% in 2025-2026," she told reporters at the launch of Wepack Asean 2024 yesterday.

Regarding the performance of Malaysia's packaging industry this year, the Malaysian Corrugated Carton Manufacturers' Association (MACCMA) chairman Henry Low anticipated a more robust industry performance recovery around March or April 2025.

"This is due to regional and seasonal factors as well as global economic pressures, which are key contributors to the current trend.

"This recovery may be spurred by anticipated improvements in Malaysia-China relations following upcoming political developments, which could influence investment flows and trade conditions," he added.

Wepack Asean 2024, organised by RX in collaboration with MACCMA, is the most professional exhibition on packaging container manufacturing and its applications in Southeast Asia.

The trade show, which is the second edition in Malaysia held at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre from Nov 14-16, is expected to receive more than 5,000 delegates from around the world to explore and learn the latest technologies in the industry, sustainable solutions, and opportunities for transformational growth. - Bernama

Govt committed to national ESG development: Nik Nazmi

BY HAYATUN RAZAK
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

➤ Climate change is real, is there, no matter who the US president is, says minister

PUTRAJAYA: The government is staying committed to national environmental, social, and governance (ESG) development despite concerns that the newly elected Trump administration in the US may dismantle ESG regulations.

Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad said "climate change is real, no matter who the American president is".

"We recognise Malaysia is already witnessing the impact of climate change. Today, we have villages on the East Coast being swallowed by the sea. We're seeing seawater in the drains in Klang. So it's real, it's out there, no matter who the American president is," Nik Nazmi said in his keynote speech at the launch of IOI Properties Group's IOI Sustain Roadmap 2030 and the official unveiling of Malaysia's

largest mall solar photovoltaic system at IOI City Mall yesterday.

He added: "We know that climate change presents a wide range of effects on the environment and society, impacting businesses as well."

Nik Nazmi said the National Climate Change Bill is expected to be tabled in Parliament by the first quarter of 2025.

"For Malaysia to thrive and maintain climate resilience, governance plays a crucial role." Currently, he said, the Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Ministry is conducting stakeholder engagement sessions as well as producing consultation papers for public comment until Nov 18. "You can go to our website

and see the draft of the papers so that we can get your views from the private sector, from the public."

Nik Nazmi said the government views nature-based solutions as an important aspect in addressing climate change.

"Our commitment to nature-based solutions has led us to protect and restore our forests, wetlands, and coastal ecosystems, which serve as natural buffers against climate impacts," he said.

Nik Nazmi pointed out that Malaysia is home to some of the world's oldest rainforests, and Malaysia is determined to preserve them as crucial carbon sinks and biodiversity hotspots. "These ecosystems play an indispensable role in maintaining the delicate

balance of our climate and are a cornerstone of our resilience strategy," he said.

Nik Nazmi said that during a town hall session in July, more than 30 local universities and research institutions expressed strong support for the establishment of a biodiversity centre and natural history museum.

"We have submitted a plan of the development budget through the Ministry of Economy to construct a biodiversity centre and natural history museum costing from the government side ... RM140 million."

He added "But that, I think, is a very bare basic. And that is why we have to get the private-public partnership to get more funding and receive commitments from many big companies so that we can really have a state-of-the-art biodiversity centre, which is, I would say, in line with what we can showcase to the world with the collections that we have."

Nik Nazmi said that almost every megadiverse country has centres of excellence for biodiversity management. However, Malaysia is one of the few countries without a national biodiversity centre. "Although Sabah, Sarawak and Pahang established state-level biodiversity centres earlier, there is an undeniable need for a national-level centre to complement the state efforts."

Nik Nazmi said it will have several core functions, including the management of scientific collections and biodiversity databases, the coordination of scientific research for the science and policy interface, the establishment of centres for advanced training in biodiversity, the organisation of exhibitions and outreach programmes, the provision of advisory and consulting services, and as a major visitor attraction.

Launch of Sustain Roadmap 2030 & Official Energising of Largest Mall Solar PV System



Nik Nazmi (centre) officiating the launch of IOI Sustain Roadmap 2030 and energising of Malaysia's largest mall solar PV system with, from left, IOIPG COO (property investment) Chris Chong (left), IOIPG COO (property development) Teh Chin Guan, BM Greentech Bhd executive director Gan Chih Soon and Tera managing director Michael Leong.

IOI Properties rolls out sustainability roadmap

PUTRAJAYA: IOI Properties Group Bhd (IPG) yesterday took a step forward in its journey towards net-zero carbon emissions by introducing IOI Sustain Roadmap 2030 (ISR 2030), a comprehensive blueprint aimed at advancing sustainability across the group's operations.

ISR 2030 highlights 12 strategic pillars that will guide IPG's efforts to address key economic, environmental, social, and governance priorities.

As part of the initiative, IPG is powering up IOI City Mall here with the biggest mall solar panel system in Southeast Asia.

The installation was undertaken in partnership with Tera VA Sdn Bhd,

whereby the 4,005 kWp (4 MWp) solar photovoltaic (PV) system is expected to generate 19,279 gigajoules of energy with an expected carbon emissions reduction of 4,059.34 total carbon dioxide content (tCO2) annually.

Tera is one of IPG's partners in its journey of sustainability, particularly in renewable energy investment and emissions reduction.

In January, IPG appointed Tera to house, install and maintain a solar PV system to supply renewable energy for IOI City Mall's day-to-day operations. The installation of the panels began in January and was completed in March.

IPG chief operating officer (property investment) Chris Chong said the newly energised solar PV system complements the mall's existing 3.5 MWp system with 3,358 tCO2 emissions avoidance per year.

Tera managing director Michael Leong said the energising process followed feed-in tariff approval from the Sustainable Energy Development Authority Malaysia for the solar PV panels, which cover 188,674 square feet on the mall's rooftop.

"This extensive rooftop installation required our engineering expertise to deploy optimised solutions that deliver high yield and sustained reliability, ultimately re-

ducing the total cost of ownership," he added.

IPG group chief operating officer (property development) Teh Chin Guan said the company is dedicated to designing sustainable homes and commercial buildings that prioritise green features and minimise environmental impact.

"We are investing in solar energy generation for properties within our portfolio, including sales galleries, retail malls, office towers and landed residential products. These investments contribute significantly to overall emission reductions towards our low carbon objectives."

Besides IOI City Mall, installation of

a 250.4 kWp solar PV system at IPG's Palm Garden Golf Club in Putrajaya has been completed, while a larger 2,336 kWp system at IOI Mall Puchong is nearly finished, expected to reduce emissions by 2,367.4 tCO2 annually.

Altogether, Tera's solutions will enable IPG to avoid 6,680.01 tCO2 emissions per year.

IPG is also working on installing a solar PV system at IOI City Mall II.

With the completion of solar panel installations at IOI City Mall Phase II and Palm Garden Golf Club, IPG's total installed solar capacity is set to reach 9,048.9 kWp by year-end, projected to offset 9,170.53 tCO2 in emissions annually. - by HAYATUN RAZAK

MClean Technologies receives Bursa approval for private placement

PETALING JAYA: MClean Technologies Bhd, a provider of precision cleaning and surface treatment solutions, has obtained approval from Bursa Malaysia Securities Bhd (Bursa Securities) for the listing and quotation of up to 49.3 million placement shares to be issued subject to certain conditions.

The proposed private placement is part of a series of strategic corporate proposals aimed at solidifying the company's financial position, diversifying its revenue stream and driving growth.

To recap, MClean Technologies on Oct 8 announced corporate proposals encompassing



the private placement, acquisition of a plastic injection moulding business, diversification into the plastic injection business and share capital reduction, which are subject to shareholders' approval at an extraordinary general meeting.

The proposed private placement involves the issuance of up to 49.3 million new ordinary shares, which is set to raise up to RM12.3 million for the company. The funds raised will primarily support the proposed acquisition of We Total Engineering Sdn Bhd's plastic injection moulding business at its net book value of RM6.04 million and to

provide working capital to support the newly acquired business.

This acquisition, along with the diversification into plastic injection moulding business, aligns with MClean Group's strategy to broaden its revenue sources and service range, accessing new growth avenues in key sectors including electrical and electronics, automotive, oil and gas, and medical devices. With demand growing for durable, lightweight, and high-precision plastic components in these industries, MClean Group is well-positioned to capitalise on these growth opportunities.

Executive chairman and executive director, Datuk Dr Terence Tea Yeok Kian (*pic*) stated, "We are delighted to have Bursa Securities' approval

for the proposed private placement, which represents a significant step forward for MClean. "Acquiring the plastic injection moulding business at a net book value of RM6.04 million represents a good buy for MClean providing reasonable value. With We Total's established track record in plastic injection moulding business, the proposed private placement will raise funds for MClean to undertake the acquisition and enables us to diversify our income base, expand our service offerings, and enhance MClean's position for future growth.

"Together with the private placement and capital reduction, these initiatives align with our focus on long-term profitability and value creation for our shareholders."

Sama expands reach, sets up Malaysia, Singapore chapters

► Underscores commitment to hyperlocalisation, a strategy vital for brands seeking to resonate with Asia-Pacific's diverse markets

KUALA LUMPUR: Strategic Asia Marketing Alliance (Sama) yesterday marked a significant milestone in Asia-Pacific's (Apac) creative industry by launching its Malaysia and Singapore chapters.

Following a successful debut in Indonesia, the expansion underscores the alliance's commitment to hyperlocalisation, a strategy vital for brands seeking to resonate with Apac's diverse markets.

Sama's expansion arrives as corporate investment in branding surges globally, with total advertising spend across all formats projected to reach US\$1 trillion (RM4.4 trillion) by 2026. Businesses are recognising the value of culturally attuned branding to drive competitive advantage and deepen customer connections.

With a dynamic consumer base exceeding 600 million across 11 nations, Apac offers substantial opportunities for growth. The World Economic Forum reports that the region's creative industry currently contributes around 5% to its gross domestic product, a number set to rise as more companies invest in tailored,

localised marketing.

As brands increasingly turn to hyperlocalisation, Sama's expertise and deep local insights position it as an essential partner for those seeking to make a lasting impact in Apac's diverse and complex markets.

Uniting Apac's top marketing agencies, Sama offers a suite of services across its network, including branding, public relations, search engine optimisation, search engine marketing, social media management, content marketing, influencer engagement, and digital out-of-home advertising. With a data-driven, hyperlocalised approach, Sama enables brands to engage effectively with Apac's rapidly evolving consumer market.

"Brands face an exciting yet challenging landscape in Apac, where the difference between success and stagnation often lies in understanding local nuances," said Sama founder Teng Chan Leong, who is also CEO of Skribble.

"Our mission is to empower brands to

connect authentically with consumers across this complex region through tailored, culturally relevant approaches. With 88% of companies in the region viewing brand perception as central to their business strategy, and many attributing market share gains directly to brand trust and cultural relevance, hyperlocalisation is the key to unlocking genuine engagement and sustainable growth in Apac," he added.

Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) digital industry acceleration head Wan Murdani Wan Mohamad expressed MDEC's commitment to Sama's vision for driving hyperlocalisation across Malaysia and the Apac region, emphasising that brands must adopt a local-first approach to thrive in Southeast Asia's digital economy, which is set to reach a gross merchandise value of US\$263 billion in 2024.

"With nearly 70% of Apac consumers favouring culturally resonant brands, developing digital talent and enabling technology transfer is crucial. This focus aligns with Malaysia Digital's goals to drive the nation's digital economy by fostering innovation, enhancing digital skills, and promoting growth that reflects both local and regional needs," he added.

Yesterday's launch featured thought leadership panels on the future of hyperlocalised marketing, bringing together brand leaders from iWISERS, Superminted, GSC Cinemas, Asia Pop Culture Con, Beutea and others to share key insights on branding, talent development in digital industries, and the role of technology transfer in advancing hyperlocalised marketing.

MISC third-quarter earnings ease but nine-month bottom line rises

KUALA LUMPUR: MISC Bhd's net profit eased to RM338.9 million in the third quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (Q3'24) from RM430.4 million in Q3'23.

Revenue was 11% lower at RM2.96 billion, compared with RM3.37 billion previously, due to lower revenue recognition from the conversion of a floating, production, storage and offloading unit (FPSO) in the offshore business segment as well as lower freight rates and earning days in the petroleum and product shipping segment in the current quarter.

In a filing with Bursa Malaysia, MISC attributed the lower revenue from its offshore business segment to the lower project progress during the quarter.

"The segment recorded an operating loss of RM33.2 million compared to an operating profit of RM58.1 million in 3Q 2023 due to lower construction profit following lower project progress as well as an increase in construction costs of the FPSO," it said.

Meanwhile, the company said the revenue for the petroleum and product shipping segment dropped due to currency translational loss from the strengthening of the ringgit against the US dollar in the current quarter.

Nonetheless, for the nine months ended Sept 30, 2024 (9M'24), MISC registered a higher net profit of RM1.64 billion versus RM1.5 billion in 9M'23.

However, its revenue decreased to RM9.93 billion compared to RM9.99 billion in 9M'23 due to lower profit in the offshore business from lower construction profit.

"The gas assets and solutions segment also recorded lower profit from lower earning days and charter rates, coupled with higher vessel operating costs," it said.

MISC declared a third interim dividend of eight sen per share for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2024, with the entitlement date set for Nov 28, and payable on Dec 17.

On prospects, the company said the petroleum and product shipping segment's operating income is projected to remain steady, underpinned by its fleet of long-term chartered vessels and the potential to capitalise on opportunities in the spot trading market.

"The medium-term outlook for the offshore business segment remains positive, supported by stable oil prices, with projects in South America, West Africa and the Asia-Pacific regions driving demand for newbuild FPSO units," it said.

Moving forward, its offshore business segment will actively pursue new opportunities in the market while maintaining a strong focus on the timely and efficient completion of existing projects to mitigate potential cost overruns, MISC added. — Bernama

L & P Global posts nine-month net profit of RM9 million

PETALING JAYA: Integrated industrial packaging solutions provider L&P Global Bhd reported revenue of RM104.4 million for the nine months ended Sept 30, 2024 (9M'24), compared to RM123.1 million in the corresponding period last year (9'23), primarily due to reduced demand for pallets and boxes and crates from customers in the renewable energy sector.

Boxes and crates remained the group's primary revenue source, accounting for 72.9%, while pallets contributed 22.3%. The remaining revenue was generated from circular supply and trading services. Geographically, Malaysia made up 81% of total revenue, with Vietnam maintaining a stable contribution of 19%.

Net profit for 9M'24 stood at RM9 million compared to RM15.7 million in 9M'23. The decline reflects the decrease in revenue, which offset the cost advantages and operational efficiencies previously achieved through economies of scale. Additionally, L&P



L&P Global says current macroeconomic challenges have significantly impacted key customer industries.

recognised a net foreign exchange loss of RM1.9 million for 9'24, in contrast to a net gain of RM1.1 million in the previous period.

As for the third quarter (Q3'24), L&P recorded revenue of RM31.7 million and net profit of RM700,000.

Executive director and CEO Ooi Lay Pheng said the current macroeconomic challenges have significantly impacted key customer industries, particularly renewable energy, leading to increased cost rationalisation among customers in these sectors.

Wasco unveils Asean's first green finance framework

► Energy company secures sustainability-linked loan amounting to US\$25 million

KUALA LUMPUR: Integrated energy group Wasco Bhd has established a sustainable & transition finance framework, marking the first of its kind in Asean, and executed its first sustainability-linked loan, amounting to US\$25 million (RM111 million) under this framework.

Maybank Investment Bank Bhd acted as the sole sustainability adviser, while Maybank Singapore branch is the sole lender.

This all-encompassing framework is notable as the first to outline eligible transition projects guided by the technical screening criteria of the latest Asean Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance (Version 3). The framework sets out how Wasco and its subsidiaries intend to enter

into Sustainability Finance Transactions following the Use of Proceeds format, Sustainability-linked format, and Transition Finance aligned with the International Capital Market Association Climate Transition Finance Handbook — also a first of its kind in Asean.

The loan, tied to Wasco's sustainability performance targets, will contribute towards the company's funding plans and shall be utilised to finance capital expenditures for their yard in Batam, Indonesia. Wasco's commitment includes achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions for Scope 1 and 2 by 2026; achieving 30% reliance on renewable energy by 2024 and 40% by 2035 from 2023 baseline; and maintaining zero lost time incident rate and fatalities.

Wasco managing director/group CEO Giancarlo Maccagno said, "This framework enables Wasco to future-proof and deliver sustainable value to our energy clients as they transition, while positioning us to serve emerging industries like sustainable bioenergy, carbon capture and storage, offshore wind, and solar. It also allows Wasco to maintain full flexibility in accessing sustainable finance across various types, formats and currencies to support specific sustainability objectives and projects."

Meanwhile, Maybank Investment Banking Group CEO Michael Oh-Lau said, "This framework provides clarity and confidence to Wasco and banks to finance decarbonisation initiatives. Maybank is the first Malaysian bank to launch a transition finance framework, which is also the first of its kind in Asean. With this, we are proud to collaborate with Wasco in developing solutions and contributing towards greening supply chains in the energy sector."

MG Motor parts warehouse opens in Klang Valley

KUALA LUMPUR: SAIC Motor Malaysia has established a dedicated MG Motor parts warehouse in the Klang Valley, enhancing service efficiency and enabling faster repairs for MG owners.

Serving both internal combustion engine (ICE) and electric vehicles (EVs), the facility supports popular models including the MG4 EV, MG ZS EV, MG5 Sedan, MG HS SUV, and the upcoming MG Cyberster EV Roadster. With over 4,500 SKUs and more than 22,000 stocked parts, this new warehouse underscores MG's commitment to exceptional aftersales support.

This establishment comes as SAIC Motor Malaysia celebrates the graduation of 39 certified MG technicians, adding to a rapidly growing network of authorised service centres. With 12 centres currently operating and 13 more set to open, MG owners can enjoy convenient access to warranty services and repairs close to home.

"We're incredibly grateful to MG owners who trust us with their vehicles. Our mission is to provide peace of mind and the best aftersales support possible," said SAIC Motor Malaysia chief operating officer Lee Wen Hsiang, adding that their goal is to ensure that every MG vehicle is promptly serviced and ready for the road.

MAA projects 2024 vehicle sales to reach 800,000 units

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Automotive Association (MAA) has projected Malaysia's 2024 total industry volume (TIV) for motor vehicle sales at 800,000 units, an increase of 35,000 units or 4.57% from the previous estimate of 765,000 units.

MAA president Mohd Shamsor Mohd Zain said that the positive outlook for the coming months is driven by ongoing promotions from car manufacturers.

"Achieving the initial 765,000 target should not be an issue. In fact, I anticipate a figure slightly higher, reaching 800,000 units. The initial forecast of 765,000 units was made around May or July when we expected a dip in momentum."

"However, we did not fully

account for backorders, especially for certain models, primarily from national car manufacturers," he said at a press conference during the media launch of the Kuala Lumpur International Mobility Show 2024 (KLIMS 2024) yesterday.

Mohd Shamsor said that the 2025 TIV has not been discussed.

"We have yet to discuss it with our members. As usual, an official announcement will be made in January 2025," he added.

KLIMS 2024, organised by the MAA, is set to showcase key trends shaping the future of the automotive industry.

The 10th edition of the event will take place from Dec 5-11, at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre. — Bernama

Credit growth of Malaysian banks to improve to 6% in 2025: S&P Global

KUALA LUMPUR: The credit growth of banks in Malaysia is projected to improve to 6% in 2025, benefiting from higher economic growth and an increase in corporate demand led by key infrastructure projects, according to S&P Global.

In its Global Banks Country-By-Country Outlook 2025: Cautiously Confident report, S&P Global said the industry's non-performing loan ratio could rise by 20-25 basis points (bps) by end-2025 from 1.6% as of end-June 2024.

"This could come from restructured loans, especially to low-income households and small to midsize enterprises. Any further rollbacks in fuel subsidies would have a further impact on these two vulnerable

groups.

"The level of restructured loans has diminished steadily and stood at about 2% at end-June 2024," the report said.

S&P Global said that the credit costs should stay at 15-20 bps, similar to the pre-pandemic average, given adequate provisioning.

It said net interest margins could decline by three to five bps due to intense competition for both loans and deposits.

"Over the next two years, we forecast return on assets to stay at 1.2-1.3%.

"Upside potential to profitability could come from lower credit costs if large banks choose to write back pandemic-related provisions," it noted.

Moving forward, S&P Global said

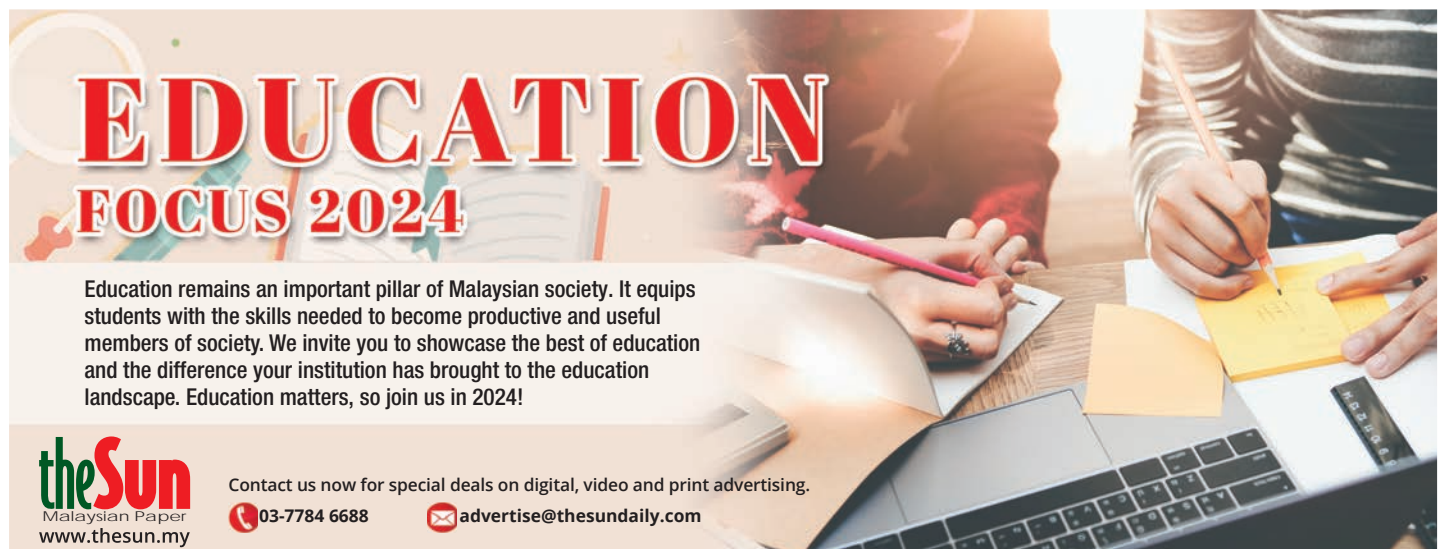
Malaysian banks' asset quality is closely correlated to employment levels, given a large share of household loans.

"High household leverage poses some risk. However, stable employment and adequate household financial assets are mitigating factors," it said.

Regarding the property sector, S&P Global said banks have material exposure to real estate development and construction at about 8% of total loans.

It said oversupply in the commercial real estate market and elevated office vacancy rates remain structural challenges.

"Banks have been cautious lending to the sector and have gradually reduced exposure," it said. — Bernama



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SingTel expects improved full-year growth

➤ Southeast Asia's largest telecoms provider declares interim dividend of S\$0.07 per share

SINGAPORE: Singapore Telecommunications posted a 6% rise in underlying net profit for the half-year and gave improved guidance for the full year, underpinned by strength at its Australia unit Optus and technology services business NCS.

Southeast Asia's largest telecoms provider also said it expects its earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) to grow at a low double-digit rate for fiscal year 2025, an improvement over earlier guidance which gave a wider range of high single-digit to low double-digit growth.

SingTel shares closed slightly lower at S\$3.18 yesterday.

Optus benefited from higher mobile service revenue, price increases and better cost management, while the NCS segment

reported strong demand for its services, the company said.

EBIT for Optus surged 58% for the half-year while the NCS segment's EBIT jumped 40%.

"Optus is benefiting from Telstra's 4% to 5% (price) hike in July 2024.

"NCS also benefits from growth in its Gov+ and Telco+ businesses, and cost-reduction efforts," said Sachin Mittal, global head of telecom, media and tech research at DBS Bank.

Telstra, one of Australia's top telecom firms, increased prices for postpaid mobile plans in early July this year.

Near-term growth for Singtel will be driven by Optus and NCS, Mittal added.

SingTel's infrastructure unit, Digital InfraCo, "will start delivering growth in 18 to 24 months from ramp up of data-centre capacity".

Demand for data centres has risen in recent years as firms adopt artificial intelligence to streamline operations.

"Both NCS and (SingTel's data centre brand) Nxera ... are continuing to invest in AI infrastructure and capabilities to better serve enterprise and governments," SingTel group chief executive officer Yuen Kuan Moon said.

"We will continue scaling NCS and building out Nxera's data centres, which will commence operations from mid-2025 to meet increasing demand."

The company said underlying net profit came in at S\$1.19 billion (RM3.9 billion) for the six months ending Sept 30.

It also declared an interim dividend of S\$0.07 per share, higher than the S\$0.052 per share declared a year earlier. - Reuters

TSMC sued for alleged discrimination

WASHINGTON: More than a dozen US-based employees of Taiwanese chipmaking giant TSMC have sued the company for apparent discrimination against non-Asian workers, according to a recent lawsuit.

The suit alleges that the world's largest contract manufacturer of chips - used in everything from Apple iPhones to Nvidia's AI hardware - unfairly favours Asian staff in terms of hiring, firing and working standards.

Initially filed in August, the suit was refiled last week as a class action case with 13 plaintiffs named.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company declined to comment on the litigation but said in a statement yesterday that it "believes strongly in the value of a diverse workforce."

The company is at the forefront of a generative AI revolution, churning out the world's most advanced microchips needed to power products made by Silicon Valley.

It has secured billions of dollars in US funding and has agreed to operate three factories in Arizona.

The suit alleges that TSMC routinely subjects those who do not hail from Taiwan or China to a "hostile work environment where verbal abuse, gaslighting, isolation, and humiliation is common, and oftentimes leads to the constructive discharge of these employees".

The 13 plaintiffs - whose backgrounds include the United States, Mexico, Nigeria, Europe and Korea - were seeking damages to redress TSMC's apparent discrimination practices.

The lawsuit was first filed in August by TSMC recruitment manager Deborah Howington, alleging bias towards Asians, and particularly Taiwanese citizens, in decisions on hiring and termination of employment.

It claims that non-Asian workers are "frequently excluded from business discussions, as conversations are often conducted in Mandarin, and business documents are routinely written in Mandarin".

TSMC said in a statement that "we hire and promote without regard to gender, religion, race, nationality, or political affiliation because we respect differences, and believe that equal employment opportunities strengthen our competitiveness". - AFP



Huang and Son talking during the AI event in Tokyo. - AFP/IC/JP PRESS

SoftBank first to receive new Nvidia chips for supercomputer

TOKYO: SoftBank's Japanese telecoms unit will receive the first chips using Nvidia's latest Blackwell design for its supercomputer, the California-based chip designer said, as Masayoshi Son looks to ride the artificial intelligence boom.

SoftBank Corp is also planning to use Grace Blackwell chips for a further supercomputer, said Nvidia, which held an AI event in Tokyo on Wednesday featuring SoftBank Group CEO Son and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang.

Son is pushing to expand his conglomerate's exposure to the AI wave, taking a stake in OpenAI and acquiring chip startup Graphcore, after a turbulent few years that forced the ebullient billionaire to retrench.

The two businessmen held a "fireside chat" at the event, with Jensen recalling Son had once offered to lend him money to buy Nvidia as its value was not understood by the market.

"He wanted to lend me money to buy Nvidia. All of it. Now I regret not taking it," Huang said, laughing.

Son said the offer was made a month after he acquired chip designer Arm.

The Japanese billionaire later built and sold down a stake in Nvidia and attempted the sale of Arm to Huang's company which foundered on regulatory hurdles.

Nvidia, once best known as a designer of graphic chips for gaming, has gone on to become the world's most valuable company

powered by insatiable demand for its chips.

While Son has built a reputation as a far-sighted investor with relationships with leading entrepreneurs and bets on companies such as Alibaba, he has also made high profile slips such as backing office space sharing firm WeWork.

With telcos around the world look for new growth drivers, SoftBank has partnered with Nvidia to pilot a network that can run both 5G and AI services.

"It's the same vision that we can smell, right? It's like a wolf smell wolf," Son said of the similarities between the two men.

"I have two puppies. I don't like that mental image," Huang joked in response. - Reuters

Tencent's gaming rebound drives Q3 revenue up 8%

BEIJING: Chinese technology giant Tencent Holdings posted a 8% rise in third-quarter revenue, extending momentum in its gaming business, while growth in its fintech segments softened amid China's economic headwinds.

Tencent reported revenue of 167.19 billion yuan (RM104 billion) for the quarter ended Sept 30, in line with the average analyst estimate of 167.8 billion yuan, according to LSEG data.

Domestic gaming revenue rose 14% to 37.3 billion yuan, extending the previous quarter's 9% growth and marking two straight quarters of expansion after earlier declines.

International gaming revenue increased 9% to 14.5 billion yuan.

The result was partly driven by *Dungeon & Fighter Mobile*, a marquee title launched in May, as well as the release of a new shooting game, *Delta Force*, in September.

The company's fintech and cloud services reported modest growth of 2% to 53.1 billion yuan, with its payments business declining amid weak consumer spending in China.

Tencent's net income rose 47% to 53.23 billion yuan. Analysts had on average expected net income of 52.89 billion yuan. - Reuters

AMSTERDAM: Europe's largest tech firm, computer chip equipment maker ASML, said yesterday it expected sales growth to average 8% to 14% over the coming five years, as a boom in AI fuels strong demand for its most advanced tools.

The guidance, which analysts said was reassuring, came in a statement ahead of the company's investor day at Veldhoven in the Netherlands, when it will face questions on prospects for sales to China after Donald Trump was elected as US president.

"We expect that our ability to scale EUV technology into the next decade ... positions ASML well to contribute to, and leverage the artificial intelligence opportunity," CEO Christophe Fouquet said in a statement, referring to the company's most advanced chip making equipment.

This would allow ASML to deliver

ASML sees buoyant sales continuing through 2030

➤ Guidance seen reassuring after Q3 miss, no mention of prospects on China front

significant revenue and profitability growth, he added.

The company forecast revenue of €44 to €60 billion (RM206 to RM282 billion) by 2030, and gross margins of between 56% and 60%, unchanged from the company's

previous long-term guidance issued in 2022.

Analysts said that was reassuring, after third quarter earnings in October missed analysts' expectations by the most in years, as customers such as Intel and Samsung

delayed orders for equipment amid weakness in chip markets other than AI. "The first glance looks positive," said Kevin Wang of Mizuho Securities, adding that some investors had expected a cut in guidance.

"Management remains bullish on ASML's sales and profitability growth."

Chipmakers such as top ASML customer TSMC of Taiwan, which manufactures AI chips for Nvidia, use ASML's EUV tools to create circuitry.

The company is banned from selling its EUV and most of its DUV lithography equipment in China following waves of curbs by the US and Dutch governments that began in Trump's first term.

In October, ASML said it expected China sales to fall to 20% of total sales after a contribution of more than 40% over the past six quarters.

ASML is still able to sell relatively older "dry" DUV product lines in China without restrictions. - Reuters

Allianz beats forecasts with 22% rise in profit

FRANKFURT: Germany's Allianz on Wednesday beat expectations with a 22% rise in third-quarter net profit, helped by lower claims from natural catastrophes, and it gave an improved outlook for 2024.

The property and casualty division was cited as a particular area of strength because claims from natural catastrophes were down from a year ago, even though such damages remained high, the company said.

Allianz reported net profit attributable to shareholders of €2.47 billion (RM11.75 billion) in the three months through September, compared with a profit of €2.02 billion a year earlier.

The figure surpassed a €2.37 billion consensus forecast.

Allianz said its 2024 operating profit would now land in the upper half of its target range of between €13.8 billion and €15.8 billion.

"Natural catastrophes have tested Allianz's financial and operational resilience, tests which we have passed," CEO Oliver Baete said.

Assets that Allianz manages for third parties rose by €37 billion from the end of the second quarter to €1.84 trillion, helped by market gains and net inflows.

Reuters reported last month that Allianz was weighing options for its smaller asset management division, Allianz Global Investors.

Those options include a merger or partial sale of the division. - Reuters



The Allianz logo is displayed on a company building at the financial and business district of La Defense in Paris. - REUTERS/SPIC

Workers stage walkout at US maker of 'Fallout' video game

SAN FRANCISCO: Hundreds of US workers at the video game giant behind *Fallout* staged a one-day strike on Wednesday over outsourcing and remote work policies, their labour union said.

"We are not afraid to do what's necessary to make sure that Microsoft meets us at the bargaining table over key issues like remote work options and outsourcing," ZeniMax Workers United said on X.

"Today, we are on strike." The group, part of the Communication Workers of America (CWA), said hundreds of ZeniMax employees in Maryland and Texas were on strike through the work day to "tell Microsoft to stop dragging their feet" when it comes to worker demands about job security and improved conditions.

Concerns of strikers included requiring workers who had been working from home some or all of the time to return to offices, the union said.

Microsoft acquired ZeniMax Media for US\$7.5 billion (RM33 billion) in 2021, marking a major expansion for its Xbox division.

ZeniMax is the parent company of Bethesda Softworks, publisher of the *Fallout* and *Elder Scrolls* franchises. - AFP

Super Micro delays filing financial report as delisting looms

SAN FRANCISCO: Super Micro Computer said on Wednesday it would delay the filing of its financial report for the September quarter, as the AI server-maker seeks a new auditor amid a delisting threat following its failure to submit its annual report.

Super Micro's share price is down 55% since Ernst & Young resigned as auditor last month after earlier flagging concerns about the company's governance, transparency and internal control over financial reporting.

Earlier this month, the company said a special committee set up to probe the issues raised by Ernst & Young in late July had not found evidence of fraud.

Super Micro said on Wednesday it needs additional time to select and

engage a new auditor and for management to complete its assessment of internal controls over financial reporting as of June 30, 2024.

The Nasdaq on Sept 17 notified the company of non-compliance with listing rules and it had 60 days to file its annual report or submit a plan to regain compliance.

A partner for leading chipmakers such as Nvidia and AMD, Super Micro's shares jumped more than three-fold in 2023, making it one of the biggest beneficiaries of a rally in AI-linked stocks.

However, the shares have come under pressure this year on concerns over its accounting practices, while Hindenburg Research disclosed a short position in August, alleging "accounting manipulation". - Reuters





Crypto market capitalisation hits record US\$3.2 trillion

▶ Bitcoin takes a breather after breaking US\$90,000

SINGAPORE: The value of the global cryptocurrency market has topped US\$3 trillion (RM13 trillion) as the election of Donald Trump as US president spurred bets that friendlier American regulation could usher in a new boom for all corners of the asset class.

The sum market value of cryptocurrencies touched a high of US\$3.2 trillion early yesterday in Asia, according to analytics and data aggregator CoinGecko.

That puts it above the heady days of 2021, when pandemic-era stimulus pumped up speculative investments, and marks a stunning revival from just a few months ago when crypto prices and turnover had been flatlining.

Bitcoin dominates the market and the market value milestone coincided with the token's rise to a record US\$93,480.

"Generally the way this market goes is bitcoin will break out and then the rest of the altcoins will follow," said Matthew Dibb, chief investment officer at cryptocurrency asset manager Astronaut Capital.

"So there is that gradual rotation of capital ... and then we can expect the total market cap to increase."

Trump's election, and that of several pro-crypto lawmakers to Congress, has driven the wave of euphoria by apparently clearing some of the uncertainty around US regulations.

Bitcoin has doubled this year and is up 30% since the US election on Nov 5 to US\$90,000. Smaller cryptocurrency ether is up about 33% since the vote to US\$3,220.

Dogecoin, an alternative and volatile token promoted by billionaire Trump-ally Elon Musk, has gained 140%.

Crypto exchange-traded funds have also been heavily bought, market participants said, possibly an indicator of buying by financial institutions which tend to shy away from directly holding cryptocurrencies.

"Bitcoin enthusiasts are known for bold predictions, but hitting US\$100,000 by year-end seems feasible," said Carl Szantyr, managing partner at Blockstone Capital.

The explosive rally is the latest in the boom-bust roller coaster that had bitcoin below US\$20,000 at the start of last year, in the depths of the "crypto winter" that followed the collapse of brokerage FTX and other crypto projects.

To be sure, cryptocurrencies' market value is dwarfed by traditional asset classes.

At current prices, the value of the 209,000 tonnes of gold the World Gold Council says has been mined in history is worth nearly US\$19 trillion.

The market capitalisation of the S&P 500

index is US\$50.6 trillion.

Some parts of the ecosystem do also not show signs of recovery and others point to a degree of caution.

Average sales prices for non-fungible tokens have been around US\$2,000 since May, according to NonFungible.com, which tracks the Ethereum and Ronin blockchains, and have kicked up, but only to about US\$2,700.

In Singapore, DBS Bank, which operates a digital exchange, said while trading had surged and it had executed more than one-third of last year's total volume in the first ten days of November, investors were not yet heading into the more obscure parts of the market.

"We've not seen our clients shift their assets towards more exotic platforms or decentralised exchanges," said David Hui, chief commercial officer of DBS Digital Exchange.

Still, those in the industry say the renewed attention will bring momentum.

"There's increased interest and willingness to look at DeFi and other possibilities associated with blockchain," said Danny Chong, a co-founder of decentralised asset tracking platform Tranchess.

"The heightened market capitalisation, which if sustained for a longer period, would likely also invite deeper interest into new and existing themes," he said, including tokenisation of real world assets and blockchain-based payment services. - Reuters

Guardian quits X, citing 'disturbing content'

LONDON: British news publisher *The Guardian* said on Wednesday it will no longer post to X, citing "disturbing content" on the social media platform, including racism and conspiracy theories.

The left-leaning *Guardian*, which has 10.7 million followers on X, becomes the first large UK media company to retreat from the platform that Elon Musk purchased in 2022.

Critics say Musk's hands-off approach has allowed lies and hate speech to spread on the platform formerly known as Twitter.

"We think that the benefits of being on X are now outweighed by the negatives and that resources could be better used promoting our journalism elsewhere," *The Guardian* said in an editorial published on its website.

"This is something we have been considering for a while given the often disturbing content promoted or found on the platform, including far-right conspiracy theories and racism."

In response, Musk posted on X and said of *The Guardian*: "They are irrelevant."

Musk, who supported Donald Trump ahead of his US election victory this month, has said he is defending freedom of speech.

Trump on Tuesday named Musk to a role aimed at creating a more efficient government.

The role of X and other platforms came under the spotlight in Britain this year when far-right and racist violence broke out after online posts falsely claimed that an attack in the northern English town of Southport, where three young girls were killed, was the work of a migrant.

Reuters was first to report last month that a British police force had quit posting on X, with several more reviewing their involvement.

In recent months, some British charities, health and educational establishments have said they will no longer post to X.

The British government continues to post on X but does not use it for paid communications.

It does, however, advertise on Meta's Instagram and Facebook, a government source said last month. - Reuters



Trump gesturing at the Bitcoin 2024 event in the southern US city of Nashville. - REUTERS/SPIC

Bank of France head urges united EU front

PARIS: Bank of France governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau on Wednesday urged European states to work together following the impending return of Donald Trump to the US presidency or face economic isolation.

"Europe must wake up," de Galhau told France Inter radio station.

"That was true before the election of Donald Trump - but it is all the more so today" now that the former president, who has promised to hit all imports to the US with at least 10% tariffs, is set to return to the White House in January.

"If I had to sum up the European route map, I would say first off that Europe must get back on its feet.

"And let's stop castigating ourselves in the process.

"We have assets in Europe. Europe must also unite and beef up," he said, citing recommendations from a recent report by former Italian prime minister Mario Draghi to expand the single market, mobilise savings across the EU bloc and simplify a multiplicity of overly complex standards.

If European nations do not work together," in particular France and Germany, then we will remain on the sidelines of the global economic match", de Galhau warned.

Turning to the French economy, he found "the landscape neither bleak nor uniformly rosy", with "the economy confirming a certain resilience month after month".

De Galhau stressed "there is a great deal of uncertainty among entrepreneurs about the budgetary and fiscal debate in France, and now also the future American policy". - AFP

Nokia buys world's largest API hub to cash in on 5G

HELSINKI: Nokia said on Wednesday it had bought the world's largest application programming interface (API) hub and marketplace from US company Rapid as it seeks to boost revenues from its 5G and 4G networks.

Like other telecom gear makers, Finland's Nokia has been looking for ways to monetise its 5G equipment or diversify its market, as it hopes to attract investments linked to the rise of artificial intelligence.

Nokia said it will own the US tech start-up's technology and research and development unit under the deal, enabling its clients to integrate their networks, control their API usage and collaborate with the platform's developer base.

API are strings of code which enable standardised communication, exchange of data and functionality between software components.

Their use on advanced 5G networks provides faster, safer and more accurate access to data such as a users' location or connectivity status. - Reuters

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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Kelington posts higher profit for Q3 despite lower revenue

KUALA LUMPUR: Kelington Group Bhd posted a net profit of RM32.9 million for Q3 ended Sept 30, 2024, up by 3.94% from RM31.66 million posted in the same quarter last year.

Revenue for the integrated engineering solutions provider declined 23.52% to RM307.31 million in Q3'24 from RM401.82 million posted in Q3'23.

The lower revenue is mainly due to key projects in Singapore and Malaysia nearing completion.

The Industrial Gases division maintained its strong performance in Q3'24, with revenue rising 30.9% YoY to RM39.4 million, driven by robust demand, reflecting sustained market strength.

In Q3'24, the Ultra High Purity division continued to be the group's primary revenue driver, contributing 68% of total revenue.

The Industrial Gases division was the second-largest contributor, representing 12% of total revenue.

The General Contracting division accounted for 10%, while Process Engineering contributed 6%. Equipment and Materials comprised the remaining 4% of total revenue for the period.

In 9M'24, Kelington achieved a net profit of RM84.4 million on the back of revenue of RM967.8 million. This represents a YoY net profit growth of 26.1% compared to RM66.9 million in 9M'23.

Kelington CEO Raymond Gan with a strong earnings performance in the first nine months, the company is confident of achieving another record-breaking year in FY24, driven by the steady execution of existing orderbook across key markets and the continued momentum in its Industrial Gas business.

The group's balance sheet remains strong with a cash balance of RM359.7 million exceeding total debt of RM174.7 million results in a net cash of RM185 million as of Sept 30, 2024.

Ringgit, emerging market currencies slide against dollar

THE ringgit, along with other emerging market currencies, continued to depreciate against the greenback yesterday as uncertainties over Trump 2.0 policies and their impact on the US Federal Reserve's (Fed) monetary policy looms large, an economist said.

At 6pm, the local note slid to 4.4840/4870 against the US dollar compared with Wednesday's close of 4.4450/4495.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said the "bottom line is about the US interest rate decision, ie, whether the Fed will continue to cut rates in 2025, pause or even raise them."

"This will depend on whether US policies would be inflationary, which could warrant the Fed to remain open to tightening its grip on monetary stance. Hence, the US dollar looks increasingly constructive, leading to weaker emerging market currencies, including the ringgit," he told Bernama.

At the close, the ringgit traded mostly lower against a basket of major currencies.

It depreciated versus the British pound to 5.6750/6787 from 5.6678/6736 at Wednesday's close and edged down against the Japanese yen to 2.8720/8741 from 2.8692/8723 but perked up vis-a-vis the euro to 4.7172/7203 from 4.7241/7289.

The ringgit also traded mostly lower compared to Asean currencies.

It rose against the Thai baht to 12.7706/7838 from 12.8235/8416 at Wednesday's close but went down versus the Singapore dollar to 3.3284/3309 from 3.3244/3280, fell vis-a-vis the Philippine peso to 7.63/7.63 from 7.57/7.58 and eased against the Indonesian rupiah to 282.6/282.9 from 281.5/282.0.

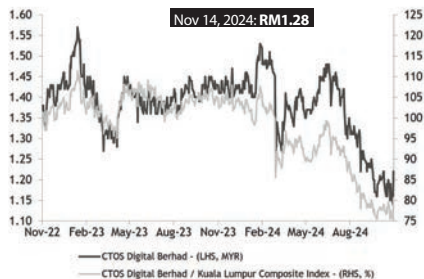
Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5340	4.3980	4.3880
1 Australian Dollar	2.9570	2.8380	2.8220
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3740	3.2750	3.2670
1 Canadian Dollar	3.2360	3.1490	3.1370
1 Euro	4.7960	4.6400	4.6200
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.6760	2.5770	2.5610
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3740	3.2750	3.2670
1 Sterling Pound	5.7680	5.5850	5.5650
1 Swiss Franc	5.1540	4.9330	4.9180
100 UAE Dirham	124.8800	118.3900	118.1900
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.8730	3.6050	3.4050
100 Chinese Renminbi	63.1800	60.4800	N/A
100 Danish Krone	65.9200	60.6400	60.4400
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.8900	55.9400	55.7400
100 Indian Rupee	5.4600	5.1200	4.9200
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0297	0.0269	0.0219
100 Japanese Yen	2.9180	2.8230	2.8130
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.8000	38.4200	38.2200
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6600	1.5500	1.3500
100 Philippine Peso	7.8300	7.3800	7.1800
100 Qatar Riyal	125.7300	119.3600	119.1600
100 Saudi Riyal	121.9900	115.8000	115.6000
100 South Africa Rand	25.7700	23.2700	23.0700
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5900	1.4600	1.2600
100 Swedish Krona	42.5600	38.7600	38.5600
100 Thai Baht	13.5500	12.0200	11.6200

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

CTOS Digital Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM1.65



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

CTOS Digital is a credit rating agency, principally involved in the business of credit reporting, digital related services, and investment holding.

In FY23, CTOS' impactful energy-saving campaigns across its operations resulted in a lower carbon footprint, as measured by a reduction in its Scope 1 and 2 emissions. Energy intensity in FY23 (1.09 MWh/employee vs FY22: 1.33) was also markedly lower. Data collection for Scope 3 emissions is also underway in FY24. CTOS' "E" score has the potential to improve further once it starts collecting waste management data/metrics.

Notwithstanding CTOS' digital business model that allows it increased scope for a high level of female representation in its lean workforce, the proportion of women in its employ decreased YoY in FY23 at both senior mgmt level (-4ppts) as well as a percentage of total workforce (-6ppts). Average employee training hours also declined in FY23 (24 vs FY22: 28), which, we believe, may have led to a marginal lower YoY of its customer service quality score to 92.67 in FY23 (FY22/21: 93.77/93.06).

CTOS' inclusivity policy also extends to board representation that has seen the proportion of female directors increase in trend since FY21 (38%) to 50% in FY23. Independent representation at board level also remained high at 67% last year. Although both board and CEO salary relative to reported PAT remained relatively low (5.8%/6.6% respectively) in FY23, scoring was impaired by the YoY uptick of +1.6ppts/+2.2ppts for both board/CEO salary respectively despite a +310% YoY surge in reported PAT last year.

BUY with RM1.65 TP. - **Maybank Investment Bank, Nov 14**

Greotech Technology Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM3.25



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

GREATEC started tracking Scope 3 emissions in FY23 but saw its combined Scope 1 & 2 emissions increase more than three-fold from FY21 to FY23. Emissions and energy intensity for FY23 however was marginally lower than FY22, whilst water intensity displayed an increasing trend throughout the period. Having completed installation of solar panels in Aug 2023, GREATEC's share of renewable energy use as a proportion of total energy consumption was 4.5% in FY23. The panels are expected to generate 4.3GWh of green energy over the expected 25-year lifespan.

The proportion of women employed in its workforce is relatively low at 14% in FY23 albeit showing an increasing trend from FY21. However, the proportion of women in executive leadership roles has been consistently high at 33% across the period. GREATEC's injury-related metrics (SR/LTI/R) weighed on its "S" score, with a sharp increase in its injury severity rate (SR) seen in FY23. Annual training hours per employee in FY23 of 47 hours was however well-above management's internal target of 36 hours.

GREATEC's female representation at board level declined from 40% in FY21 to 29% in FY23. Independent representation at Board level however, has climbed to 71% now from 60% in FY21 - placing it amongst the industry's highest percentages. Further, Board and CEO salary in relation to reported PAT also remained low (<1%/<1.5%) vis-a-vis the industry average throughout FY21-23.

BUY with RM3.25 TP. - **Maybank Investment Bank, Nov 14**

Swift Haulage Bhd

Hold. Target price: RM0.49



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

SWIFT Haulage provides transportation services such as container haulage, land transportation, warehousing & container depot and freight forwarding. The group's fleet operations in Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore consist of approximately 1,500 prime movers, 6,000 container/cargo trailers, 90 trucks and 110 liquefied natural gas/petroleum tankers. They are also a certified Multimodal Transport Operator, Authorised Economic Operator, and a Petronas licence holder.

9M'24 core net profit CNP (ex-RM15 million in one-off gain, mainly from the sale of Global Vision Logistics' shares) grew by 18% YoY to RM21.7 million, driven by an 8% increase in revenue. The higher YoY CNP was primarily due to improved performance across all segments, partly boosted by new capacity QoQ. Q3'24 CNP fell 21% to RM6 million despite revenue rose by 6%. Operating profits improved across all segments, except in Land Transport (-12% QoQ to RM2.7 million) and Other segment (RM5.8 million operating losses vs. marginal RM0.1 million operating profit in Q2'24).

We remain cautious on the group's outlook. While we anticipate growth in its W&CD segment due to recent capacity expansion, uptake rates may be slower than expected, depending on the market conditions. The group faces pressure from steep competition, posing downward risks to rates and volume handled. However, we believe its depressed share price largely reflects these headwinds.

HOLD with RM0.49 TP. - **Maybank Investment Bank, Company data, Nov 14**

THERE is nothing quite as exciting as a fresh menu unveiling, especially when it means the arrival of different flavours, bold new combinations and a chance to taste something different than usual. A new menu release is more like an invitation to taste experience that feels fresh and exciting. There is a lot to dig into, including flavour-packed, plant-based drinks and creative mash-ups. Here is a look at the latest offerings from some of Malaysia's favourite brands, each bringing its own uniqueness to the table.

Joybean
 Joybean, partnering with 7CAFe by 7-Eleven, has introduced its freshly-made soy milk (RM3.90 per cup) and soy milk pudding (RM3.50 each) in three flavours: original, chocolate and strawberry. Sourced from non-GMO Canadian beans, each sip of soy milk and spoonful of pudding brings a taste of nostalgia, making these plant-based treats a wholesome choice. Joybean's fresh range is available in 500 7CAFe outlets, with plans to reach over 2,500 stores by 2025, ensuring convenient access to nourishing, affordable soy options for Malaysians on the go.

Domino's cheeseburger pizza
 Domino's has reimagined the classic burger with its Double Cheeseburger Pizza, offering a "two burgers on one pizza" experience. The crust features a stuffed burger bun with a juicy beef patty and melted cheddar, delivering a burger taste with every bite.

On top, each pizza is loaded with burger patties, onions, pickles and Domino's signature burger sauce. Available in beef or chicken variations, with optional smoky beef strips for added flavour. What's a burger without its accompanying fries? - completing the meal. Domino's also introduced Loaded Cheeseburger Crispy Fries (RM15.90) and Crispy Fries (RM6.50). Do not miss the 40% discount on this delicious pizza, available for a limited time.



Saturdae Soft Serve is an ice cream brand that can be found at variety of eateries throughout Malaysia.



Nasi Kari Ayam Epik combo.



Ayam Brand's blend of Malaysian spices is ideal as a base for preparing meat, seafood, curry and vegetarian dishes.



Domino's new Double Cheeseburger Pizza, featuring both beef and chicken options. - PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @DOMINOSMY

New treats

➤ Discover latest F&B offerings across Malaysia

Ayam Brand's authentic Malaysian pastes

Ayam Brand offers a quick way to savour Malaysian favourites with their line of eight cooking pastes, including chicken curry, *sambal tumis* and *rendang*, each priced at an affordable RM5.

These halal-certified pastes are made with traditional ingredients and are free from preservatives and MSG. Ideal for busy home cooks, each pack can serve up to four adults, transforming any meal into a feast. Just add your preferred protein or vegetables and Ayam Brand's coconut milk for a creamy finish, to create a restaurant-quality dish in minutes.

Marrybrown's spicy ayam epik
 Marrybrown brings the heat with *Ayam Epik*, a spicy, crispy chicken marinated with a blend of local spices such as cumin, coriander and curry powder.

Available from RM15.90, you can choose between the *Nasi Kari Ayam Epik Combo*, featuring fragrant rice and *papadam*, or the two pieces *Ayam Epik Combo* (RM17.50), served with creamy mashed potatoes and Fuzie ice lemon tea. For those wanting variety, the *Ayam Epik Box Meal* (RM19.90) includes a piece of crispy chicken, a burger and mashed potatoes. Alternatively, enjoy solo sets in three pieces (RM22.90), five pieces (RM35.50) or eight pieces (RM56.80) options, bringing the full taste of *mamak*-inspired spices to each meal.

Saturdae's Wonda Coffee soft serve

Saturdae's new menu addition, the Wonda Coffee soft serve, combines the rich taste of Wonda Coffee with creamy Goodday UHT milk, creating a treat for coffee enthusiasts.

Adding to its core flavours of mango, grape and original calpis, this new offering delivers the ideal weekend indulgence. Inspired by the joy of Saturdays, Saturdae

captures the essence of relaxation in each flavour, making it a sweet escape. Saturdae soft serve is available at a variety of locations across Malaysia, including popular spots such as 4Fingers, Manekineko, Manamart, Shell stations, Cafe Mesra and MyBurgerLab.

With each new menu comes a world of fresh tastes that redefine our dining experiences. These latest offerings invite you to take a moment to savour these new menus and enjoy the artistry that each dish brings to your plate. After all, food is an experience and there is always something new waiting to be discovered.

Now is the time to treat yourself!



Fresh soy milk made from 100% non-GMO Canadian soybeans.

Joybean soy pudding original.

Joybean soy pudding strawberry.

Joybean soy pudding chocolate.



ARIES
March 20 – April 19
 This week brings a focus on your career. Work is your number one priority, becoming your source of passion and energy. It is also the ideal time to grow your professional relationships. Relationship-wise, be patient when communicating with others, especially with your romantic partners.



TAURUS
April 20 – May 20
 This week is all about personal growth. This is a time for some self-reflection and growth. When reflecting, be honest with yourself about your triumphs and mistakes. Be open to change and new beginnings too. It might be difficult but by giving up your old ways, you will thrive and realise a better version of yourself.



GEMINI
May 21 – June 20
 Intimacy calls for your attention this week. If you have a romantic partner, you may feel a deeper connection with them. It is best to strengthen your bond by spending some time with them. If you are single, take some time for self-care and focus on your emotional well-being. Spend your time indulging in some of your favourite activities.



CANCER
June 21 – July 22
 Love is in the air for you this week! You may meet and connect with someone romantically. It is best to put yourself out there and be open to new experiences. Do not let your past relationships cloud your judgement and affect your self-worth. So, go on that date! Your future self may just thank you.



LEO
July 23 – Aug 22
 It is time to prioritise your health and wellness. Though it has been difficult with your hectic schedule, be sure to set aside some time to exercise and adopt a healthy eating and sleeping schedule. Setting small and realistic steps can help to ensure you reach there. Do not be overwhelmed by the process. The first step is always the most daunting.



VIRGO
Aug 23 – Sept 22
 Your social life will be your main highlight this week. You may want to set some time aside for your friends and family. They are eagerly waiting to connect and create memories with you. If you are in a rough patch with them, now is the best time to call them and work on fixing the relationship. Fix a date and go on an outing with them as time spent together may heal wounds.

Your weekend horoscope



The sandwich has the advantage of being easy to eat, it is eaten on the go without a plate or cutlery. – UNSPLASHPIC

Easy to eat meals

» Sandwich is still world's favourite lunchtime dish

WHEN it comes to lunch, every employee has their own culinary preferences. Some swear by a good hearty meal while others prefer to eat something on the go. However, a recent survey revealed the most popular choice of working people for their lunch break is the sandwich.

The KickResume website examined the culinary habits of workers in 28 countries around the world. It turns out that many of them like to eat food typical of their country during their lunch break. In Germany, for example, working people eat a bread roll topped with *bratwurst*, the emblematic pork sausage of the German-speaking world while Canadians like to indulge in *poutine*, a dish of soft cheese fries drowned in brown gravy. In Indonesia, *rendang*, the national dish from the island of Sumatra made with meat, coconut milk and spices, is a hit with the working population.

While each country has its own specialties, the sandwich remains the preferred lunchtime option for Norwegians, Swedes, Greenlanders, French, New Zealanders, Italians and Britons. And understandably so – every culture in the world has

its own version of this dish. The French have ham with butter while the Scandinavians have *smorbrod*, a buttered slice of rye bread topped with cold meats, fish, eggs or condiments.

The sandwich has the advantage of being easy to eat – it is eaten on the go without a plate or cutlery. Ideal when you want to take advantage of your lunch break to scroll social media on your phone or work on a file in peace and quiet while your colleagues are in the cafeteria. This dish also has a reputation for being inexpensive – even if some elaborate formats are sold for over US\$12 (RM53).

Employees are increasingly attentive to what they spend during their lunch break and with good reason. American employees (78%) said they have changed their lunch habits, disclosed the 2024 *eZCater's Lunch Report*. Most of them are cutting back on outings to restaurants with colleagues and preparing their own lunch to take to office. But that does not mean they enjoy it, seven out of 10 Americans feel that the time they spend in the kitchen prepping their lunch interferes with their leisure time.

When it comes to money, a survey revealed employees in Greenland treat themselves to the most expensive meals during their lunch break. They spend over US\$26 on lunch, equivalent to 8% of their salary. Swedes, Turks and Canadians also spend similar amount on lunch. – AFP

Yoghurt dressings elevate dish

BRINGING together a shared love for rich, bold flavours, Salad Atelier and Farmers Union Greek-style yoghurt have teamed up to launch the Celebration of Spices, introducing a selection of menu items that showcase the versatility and nutritional benefits of Greek-style yoghurt.

This collaboration is inspired by the universal appeal of yoghurt as a base that elevates and harmonises spices, paying homage to Malaysia's multicultural love for aromatic flavours. Farmers Union Greek-style yoghurt, made with Australian milk, cream and natural cultures, serves as a base for infusing each dish with a creamy texture and rich taste.

Each of the new menu items highlights the fusion of flavours, anchored in the health benefits of dressings made with Greek-style yoghurt. In conjunction with the launch of Celebration of Spices, Salad Atelier is offering 15% off for customers to enjoy for a limited time only.



Limited-time menu showcases versatility and nutrition of Greek-style yoghurt.

➔ **Shrimp sriracha pasta**
 Cooked Fusilli pasta tossed with a rich sriracha sauce, paired with shrimp and topped with the spicy sriracha yoghurt dressing, offering a delightful balance of spice and creaminess.

➔ **Tandoori chicken with tortilla**
 Tender tandoori chicken served with soft tortilla, complemented by the refreshing Tepanede sauce, a fusion of Mediterranean and Indian flavours in one bite.

➔ **Sriracha chicken meatballs**
 Juicy chicken meatballs coated in a creamy spicy sriracha yoghurt dressing, balancing spice and flavour.

The menu will be available until Dec 31 across all Salad Atelier outlets. From the tangy Tepanede sauce to the spicy sriracha yoghurt dressing, each menu item is crafted to tantalise taste buds while ensuring a wholesome experience.



LIBRA
Sept 23 – Oct 22
 Your career will be in focus this week. New opportunities for career advancement may present themselves to you. Do not be afraid to go after them. But, beware as this week can also bring you some stress. So, be sure to take some time to relax and indulge in some self-care. A little self-love can do wonders for your career!



SCORPIO
Oct 23 – Nov 21
 This is a week to fulfil and give in to your wanderlust. Time to live out your travel aspirations. Set your fears and concerns aside and go on that trip with yourself and your friends. Consider practising authenticity in your relationships with yourself and others. You will require them as this week will bring some emotional intensity to your personal life.



SAGITTARIUS
Nov 22 – Dec 21
 Your finances are looking good this week! New opportunities for wealth and abundance are coming your way. But, be mindful of how you indulge in them. Socially, be vulnerable with your loved ones. Do not be afraid to express your emotions and thoughts with them. Some of them may just value and appreciate your input.



CAPRICORN
Dec 22 – Jan 19
 This week calls for closure and new chapters. It is time to surrender your concerns and be open to new beginnings. Do not waste time indulging in old habits or relationships that do not serve you. Your future calls for change. Initial impressions of change may seem like obstacles but fret not, as they are the first steps to happy beginnings.



AQUARIUS
Jan 20 – Feb 18
 This week is a time for self-reflection. Connect with your intuition and inner wisdom. It will help you navigate the problems in your life and gain new perspectives. Long-term, this will serve you well, providing you with a strong source of confidence and happiness. Remove obstacles preventing you from investing in your inner wisdom.



PISCES
Feb 19 – March 20
 Friendships have never been more crucial for you. Set some time aside to connect with your friends and form new friendships this week. The connections you make will help get you through the dark seasons of your life, aiding you in overcoming difficult weather. Professionally, be sure to check in on your colleagues at work. Your greeting may just brighten up their day.

Creating fresh memories with McCormick

BY **EE ANN NEE**

➤ Influencers share favourite dishes incorporating herbs, spices

HERBS and spices brand McCormick has introduced its Spice Stars in Malaysia, along with new packaging and an upcoming line of new products.

Its best-selling products in Malaysia include household staples paprika, garlic powder, chilli flakes and the black peppercorn grinder. McCormick spices are available across Malaysia at major retailers, including Giant, Jaya Grocer, Aeon and Village Grocer nationwide.

Spice Stars

McCormick has brought the heat to Malaysia through its Spice Stars, consisting of content creators Michelle Yeong, Syifa Jamil and Abdul Qayyum Halid.

For the Create Fresh Memories with McCormick campaign, the Spice Stars reimagined their cherished food memories using the brand's popular flavours. By sharing personal recipes and memorable moments revolving around food and flavours, the trio highlighted the emotional connection between food and memory.

➤ **Steamed egg with prawns by Yeong**

Yeong is a culinary enthusiast whose cooking videos offer recipes that are easy and comforting. With a passion for meals that nourish the soul, her content is where simplicity meets flavour.

Growing up, Yeong always enjoyed her grandmother's steamed eggs, which were served on a special yellow plate. Now, she is adding her own twist to the beloved recipe by including prawns – and with the help of spices, including garlic powder, cajun seasoning, chilli flakes, coriander



Yeong shows her audience how easy it is to make simple, comforting and nourishing food at home.



Steamed egg with prawn by Yeong.

leaf and black peppercorn, she is taking the dish to a whole new level.

➤ **Pasta masak lemak cili api by Syifa**

Named Best of Foodie at TikTok's



Syifa's videos feature traditional and contemporary cooking techniques.



Pasta masak lemak cili api by Syifa.

celebrate authentic Malaysian flavours. He is famous for his concise "2-minute, 1 recipe" videos, in which he shares quick cooking tutorials for delicious meals.

Qayyum remembers how his parents used to reward him with fried chicken, his favourite treat, when he received good grades at school. Thanks to the spices, he was able to relive those cherished memories and satisfy his cravings once again.

Spices used in this dish include garlic powder, onion powder, white pepper, cayenne pepper, paprika and black peppercorn.

For Qayyum, the special dish forms a core memory that evokes a sense of nostalgia.

"When I was younger, my parents would reward me with something I liked whenever I got good grades on my exams. One thing that never changed – I always asked for fried chicken. Thanks to herbs and spices, I can recreate the dish behind these cherished memories once more," he shared.

New packaging

Based on consumer insights and market-specific flavour preferences, McCormick has updated the packaging for its herbs, spices and seasonings. The new packaging features a sleek and clean design that allows all home cooks to achieve the best quality and flavour in their food.

The transition from plastic to glass bottles and the introduction of the SnapTight lid will work together to lock in flavour, retaining the fresh taste of herbs

2023 Awards, Syifa's engaging content showcases traditional and innovative culinary skills, capturing the attention of a broad audience with her practical approach to cooking.

Syifa fondly recalls her late father's favourite dish, which she first attempted to cook at age 11. Today, she is adapting her mother's beloved recipe using pure herbs and spices, bringing a contemporary spin to a family fave.

In this recipe, she uses garlic powder, chilli spice blend, turmeric ground, chilli flakes, parsley leaves, oregano, among others, to create a fusion delicacy.

➤ **Fried chicken by Qayyum**

Qayyum embarked on his culinary journey aiming to preserve and



Qayyum's fried chicken



Qayyum shares quick cooking tutorials for delicious meals.

and spices for longer.

Other user-friendly design improvements include displayed herb and spice names on the lid, a prominent best-by date on the lid and bottle, a new transparent label that allows for easier monitoring and a versatile lid that caters for teaspoon access and sprinkling.

McCormick introduced its refreshed designs through a series of AI-produced Recipe Mixtapes on Instagram and TikTok, blending culinary inspiration with a bit of fun.

New flavours

McCormick also launched Grill Mates BBQ sauces in regionally relevant flavours, such as Spicy Korean and Sichuan Mala.

It will soon launch the Shake Shake Black Pepper & Truffle Flavoured Seasoning for making shaken fries as well as Air Fryer Marinade Mixes for air fryer dishes.

"With this brand renovation, we want to pay homage to the special meal moments using our herbs and spices that have empowered home cooks in Malaysia. We aim to help our consumers recreate cherished culinary memories in a modern lifestyle context," said McCormick India-Southeast Asia managing director Priya Sharma.



Surviving Borneo

Our writer experiences Borneo Safari, one of the toughest 4X4 challenges in the world

BY KESHY DHILLON

WHEN we think of car enthusiasts, we often think of those with a thirst for power, speed, grip and loud engines. But the reality is quite different than that, because car enthusiasts come in all shapes and forms.

Delve deeper into the topic and you will realise there are different types of enthusiasts. Some like drag racing with thousand horsepower monsters.

Others like lightweight karts, and some like winged cars creating unimaginable downforce, all in the pursuit of posting the fastest lap time. That is of course, oversimplifying it.

But there is one group of enthusiasts that this writer met recently that opened my eyes to a whole new world of automotive passions - the 4X4 lovers, or sometimes known as the off-roads, or "off-road kaki".

For context, this writer grew up loving 4X4's, those gigantic machines with large tyres that could dig themselves out of a trench, a winch dangling at the front and heavy metal bumpers that threaten to rip the radiators or taillights out of regular cars on the road.

In fact, I had a poster of one of the scenes from Camel Trophy on my bedroom wall. Staring into that adventure poster as a boy and fantasising about the adventures that awaited in some far away land was how I escaped from the mundanity of school life.

Little did I know that I would have the chance to experience something similar years later.

I recently returned from the 2024 edition of the Borneo Safari, and it was one of the greatest adventures I have ever experienced.

Days spent pulling cars out of the mud and nights spent sleeping under the stars with the daily baths taken in the cool rivers reminded me of that very poster on my wall.

The Borneo Safari has been running for 32 consecutive years, and out of that, 16 have been officially sponsored by Isuzu Malaysia.

Taking place in and around the rainforest of

Sabah, Borneo Safari is considered to be one of the most difficult 4X4 races in the world. I was told that it is among the 40 most difficult races in the world. And after what I witnessed, I don't doubt that at all.

The 2024 edition of Borneo Safari attracted a record breaking 620 registered vehicles with over 1900 participants. The participants are divided into two categories - the Competition Category and the Expedition Category.

The Competition Category is made up of teams that tackle challenges and special stages as quickly as possible. The fastest team with the most accumulated points at the end of the eight-day competition is crowned champion.

Those that compete in this category do so in highly specialised offroad vehicles that share nothing in common with the road going cars they are based on.

They are powered by big capacity V8 diesel or petrol engines, feature long travel suspension and tyres that look like they were built for the surface of Mars.

Their winches cost as much as a Perodua Alza and they even have all-wheel-steering, to make it easier to manoeuvre around obstacles. And as brutish as they may look, these cars typically cost between RM250,000 to RM400,000.

The Expedition Category on the other hand is also known as "Tag Ons". This category too requires highly modified offroad vehicles to tackle the challenges of the jungles of Sabah but they are mostly road-going cars with jacked up suspension, mud tyres and winches that can pull up to five tons. But unlike the competitors, they do not take part in the special stage and there is no winner in this category.

The tag ons are made up of people with a knack for adventure, and includes the media team as well, which includes us as well as journalists from other countries.

This group also includes individuals who pay to experience the Borneo Safari, which means that even you can participate in the Borneo Safari for a price just to experience the

wilderness of Sabah as well as the challenges of driving offroad.

I attended the 2024 of Borneo Safari as a guest of Isuzu Malaysia. As transport, my team and other guests were provided with the latest-generation Isuzu D-Max X-Terrain, which was modified for the specific purpose of surviving the Borneo Safari.

The modification list includes uprated suspension that also gave the car higher ground clearance, mud tyres, metal bumpers, side bars to protect the car from impact, a snorkel so that the engine can breathe if the car were to be submerged, and even some electronic upgrades as well.

The terrain was unforgiving, but I was told this year was relatively okay since it did not rain that much. But still there was more mud that you can possibly imagine, enough to stop a car dead in its track and leave it there if it wasn't for the rescue vehicles that tag along as well.



SPECIFICATIONS

Engine: 3.0-litre, 4-cylinder, turbo-charged
Power: 190PS @ 3600rpm
Torque: 450Nm @ 1600rpm
Suspension: Independent double wishbones, coil springs, stabilisers with gas shock absorbers (front)/semi-elliptical leaf spring with gas shock absorbers
Price (as tested): RM158,000



Tough powertrain, comfortable interior, safety systems.



After driving it in Borneo Safari, we have nothing but respect for it.



With so much mud, getting traction becomes a real problem.



Upgraded suspension and higher ground clearance is a must.



Borneo Safari attracts participants from as far away as Japan.

Before you think that the Isuzu D-Max X-Terrain was incapable of tackling the challenges because it needed a rescue team, let me just clarify that all cars had a rescue team. It is impossible for one car to manage everything alone and a rescue team is a must. Even for the competitors and their specialised cars.

The Isuzu D-Max X-Terrain is already a very capable pick-up truck. With a virtually indestructible 3.0-litre, four-cylinder, turbocharged powertrain, the truck puts out 190PS and 450Nm of torque, transferred to the wheels through a six-speed automatic transmission.

While the powertrain is tried and tested, the latest-generation X-Terrain features a technology that seemingly no other pick-up truck has. Called the Rough Terrain Mode, this new system is designed to allow the car to pull itself out of a tough situation.

It works by sending power to individual wheels that have traction. That is the beauty of this system. While most 4X4 machines transfer power from the front or rear axle, the Rough Terrain Mode is unique since it is able to send power to a single wheel, and that is why the X-Terrain is so perfectly adapted to the great outdoors.

In total, I spent eight days in the jungle, completely disconnected from the world but yet perfectly happy at the same time.

There was a chuck wagon that tagged along and acted as a moving cafeteria, providing three meals a day with multiple snacks and limitless coffee, tea and drinks. The food was beyond good.

There was also a Camping Team whose focus was to look for locations that were suitable to set up camp for about 50 people. They did a stellar job, the group slept on riverbanks and under the canopy of the trees.

Even when I thought there was no place for a camp to be set up, they simply got their machetes out and levelled the ground for camp. Of course, that also meant our camp site was paradise for alien like critters such as a centipede as long as one's forearm.

Despite all the challenges, the Isuzu's clawed, powered and heaved their way out of everything in their path. The line-up included the new X-Terrain, the previous generation X-Terrain and even the single cab model.

And if there is anything that I learnt from this, it is that the Isuzu powertrain remains as one of the most dependable in the business, even if there are



Crawling out of a gully takes patience and teamwork.

a lot more electronics in it than ever before. The Borneo Safari is an event that deserves more recognition than it has now. I particularly salute the fact that they have a team dedicated to ensuring that no rubbish is left behind, and that environmental impact is minimised.

The team even had to ask for permission before setting up camp in some places, just to ensure that the trees and shrubs were not damaged.

The event does not only bring together like-minded individuals from near and far, but is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit when facing a seemingly impossible situation.

The drivers that were tasked with taking the group around were professionals with unique skills honed over years of surviving in the jungles, and that made my trip all the better as there was always a sense of being in control, even though it sometimes seems as if mother nature was winning.

Borneo Safari is an international event that takes place every year around October and November, and judging from the sheer number of people that take part every year and Isuzu Malaysia's dedication to the event, it is set to keep growing.



Food was never a problem even though we were deep in the jungle.



We were given a chance to try out the new, old and single-cab versions of the Isuzu D-Max.

Luxury like no other

MBM introduces the GLC 350 e 4MATIC Coupe

MERCEDES-BENZ Malaysia unveiled the Mercedes-Benz GLC 350 e 4Matic Coupe at the "Luxury Like No Other" showcase.

The Mercedes-Benz GLC 350 e 4Matic Coupe is a plug-in hybrid model that emphasises both luxury and practicality.

The GLC 350 e offers an impressive all-electric range of over 100km (WLTP) and supports speeds up to 140kph on electric power alone, making it a versatile choice for urban and longer-distance driving.

The GLC Coupe's sporty silhouette is complemented by an AMG Line exterior, highlighted with 20-inch AMG multi-spoke alloy wheels, a panoramic sliding sunroof, and aluminium-look running boards with rubber studs.

Polished aluminium roof rails enhance its



premium profile, while the Digital Light technology with Adaptive Highbeam Assist Plus ensures high visibility across various driving conditions.

Inside, the GLC Coupé continues the AMG Line's sporty aesthetic, with Artico man-made leather upholstery crafted to play with layered



surfaces for a premium feel.

The instrument panel and beltlines feature Artico leather in a nappa look, paired with a metal structure trim element.

Adding to the luxury is a multifunction sports steering wheel in nappa leather and a high-quality Burmester 3D surround sound system.

Equipped with the Driving Assistance Plus package, the GLC 350 e offers Active Distance Assist Distronic, Active Lane Keeping Assist, and Pre-Safe Impulse Side, delivering enhanced safety and driver support.

This new GLC 350 e 4Matic Coupe is priced at RM425,888.

MBM unveils new AMG lineup

MERCEDES-BENZ Malaysia has introduced a few new AMG models to their lineup. They are as follows:

G63 AMG



The all-new G63 made waves when it was introduced to the world earlier this year. It marks the continuation of an icon and is now powered by the tried-and-tested AMG 4.0-litre V8 Bi-Turbo engine. It puts out 585hp and 850Nm of torque.

One of the key new features is the combination of the 48-volt technology and an integrated starter generator (ISG). This lets the new G63 put out an additional 20hp and 200Nm for a short burst.

In terms of performance, the G63 accelerates to 100kph in just 4.4 seconds as the AMG Speedshift TCT 9G transmission providing ultra quick shifts, while top speed is rated at 220kph. The top speed goes up to 240kph with the optional AMG Performance Package.

All that bulk is kept in check with the AMG Active Ride Control suspension with active, hydraulic roll stabilisation and adaptive adjustable damping.

The new G63 is priced from RM1,948,888 without insurance and individualisation.

SL63 4Matic+



Just like the G-Class, the SL is also an icon by itself. Establishing itself as a must have model for lovers of open top luxury motoring. The new SL 63 4Matic+ builds on that reputation and now comes with a mega 4.0-litre, V8 biturbo engine that is assembled according to AMG's "One Man, One Engine" principle at the company's site in Affalterbach.

The engine puts out 585hp and 800Nm of torque from 2500 - 4500rpm. Performance includes an 0-100kph acceleration time in 3.6 seconds and a top speed of 315kph with the AMG Speedshift MCT 9G transmission putting out

smooth and quick gear shifts.

Keeping the car in check is the AMG Active Ride Control suspension with active anti-roll stabilisation and rear-axle steering.

The new SL 63 4Matic+ is priced from RM1,898,888.

Mercedes-AMG GLE 63



Together with the launch of the G63 and the SL63, Mercedes-Benz Malaysia also introduced the GLE 63 S 4Matic+ and the GLE 63 S 4Matic+ Coupe.

Both cars are powered by a 4.0-litre V8, biturbo engine making 612hp and 850Nm of torque, which is sent to all four wheels through the AMG Speedshift TCT 9G transmission.

Performance includes a 0-100kph time of just 3.9 seconds and a top speed of 280kph. Contributing to the increase in performance is the Integrated Starter Generator and a 48-volt electrical system, while handling is enhanced by the fully variable AMG Performance 4Matic+ all-wheel-drive system, and the AMG Ride Control + air suspension with adaptive adjustable damping.

The new GLE 63 S 4Matic+ is priced at RM1,191,888 while the GLE 63 S 4Matic+ Coupe is priced at RM1,229,888.

AMG GLC 43 4Matic Coupe



The Coupe embodies dynamic elegance and AMG's trademark power, equipped with a handcrafted 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine producing 421hp and 500Nm of torque.

Built under the "One Man, One Engine" philosophy, it accelerates from 0-100kph in just 4.8 seconds, with a top speed electronically limited to 250kph.

Its design includes 21-inch AMG Y-spoke wheels, AMG-specific radiator trim, and an AMG Night Package for a striking look.

The AMG GLC 43 4Matic Coupe is priced at RM498,888.

GWM M'sia secures 1.5k Haval bookings

JUST weeks after its recent launch, Great Wall Motor (GWM) Malaysia has completed 200 nationwide deliveries of the GWM Haval H6 HEV, its first locally assembled Completely Knocked Down (CKD) model.

With over 1,500 bookings already secured, the hybrid SUV has

seen strong demand, underscoring GWM's strategic expansion in Malaysia by offering affordable, high-quality vehicles.

GWM's commitment to growth is grounded in four globalization pillars: "Locally Built, Locally Operated, Locally Cultivated, and Supply Chain Integrated."

This approach has contributed to its impressive global presence, including a year-on-year overseas sales increase of 39.85% with 122,700 units sold.

By Q3 2024, cumulative global sales for GWM Haval surpassed 9 million, while the GWM Tank model reached over 500,000.

Priced at RM139,800, the GWM Haval H6

HEV offers a fuel-efficient 1.5L turbo engine, blending petrol and electric power for a combined 243 PS and 530 Nm of torque.

This hybrid engine, with Dedicated Hybrid Transmission (DHT) technology,

delivers strong acceleration, going from 0 to 100kph in 7.7 seconds, and boasts a range of up to 1,000km on a full tank.

To enhance customer satisfaction, GWM Malaysia has introduced

exclusive benefits for the H6 HEV. These include special offers such as a five-year free maintenance package (covering parts and labor) for customers who register the H6 HEV in 2024 and a loyalty rebate of RM3,000 for current GWM vehicle owners.

Additionally, the H6 HEV comes with robust warranty coverage, including a 10-year or 1,000,000km warranty for the engine, an eight-year or 1,000,000km warranty for the hybrid system, and a seven-year or 200,000km warranty for the full SUV.



Bolt launching ride-hailing in Malaysia

BOLT, Europe's leading mobility company, is launching its ride-hailing service in Malaysia's Klang Valley, aiming to provide a fast, convenient, and eco-friendly way for residents to navigate the city.

The new service allows users to request rides through the Bolt app, while also offering flexible income opportunities for local drivers, who can set their schedules independently.

By increasing transportation options, Bolt's entry is expected to help alleviate public transport demand, making shared mobility more accessible and offering an alternative to existing ride-hailing services.

Bolt's mission emphasises reducing reliance on privately owned vehicles and addressing urban challenges such as congestion, air pollution, and limited public spaces.

The company envisions integrating its platform into the urban transit network, encouraging the shift to shared mobility

solutions that support a more sustainable urban environment.

Afzan Lutfi (pic), General Manager of Bolt Malaysia, highlighted the company's goal of building cities centred around people rather than cars.

"In Malaysia, we're committed to reducing traffic congestion and transforming public spaces by shifting from private car ownership to shared mobility," he explained.

"By providing affordable and low-emission mobility options, Bolt is not only supporting Malaysia's urban mobility goals but also enhancing the quality of life in Klang Valley and beyond."

As the demand for ride-hailing grows in Malaysia, Bolt's app includes safety features and robust customer support to foster trust between riders and drivers, reinforcing a safe and reliable travel experience.

Bolt's launch marks a step towards shaping a more connected, accessible, and liveable future for Malaysia's cities.





India's Tilak Varma (right) plays a shot as South Africa's wicketkeeper Heinrich Klaasen reacts during their third T20 international match. - AFPIC

Varma hits maiden century

India's left-hander leads Men In Blue to an unbeatable series lead against Proteas

TILAK VARMA hit a maiden international century as India beat South Africa by 11 runs in the third Twenty20 international at SuperSport Park on Wednesday.

The 22-year-old left-hander made an unbeaten 107 off 56 balls in an Indian total of 219-6.

The Proteas were restricted to 208-7, giving India an unbeatable 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

"I was waiting for this for a long time, coming back after injury," Varma told host broadcaster

SuperSport, referring to a hand injury which restricted his playing time in 2024.

Varma epitomised the "fearless cricket" espoused by captain Suryakumar Yadav.

Promoted to No. 3 in the batting order, he faced the third ball of the match after Sanju Samson was bowled for a second successive duck by Marco Jansen.

He immediately went on the attack, hitting the second and third balls he faced from Jansen for four and six as he launched an innings which included eight fours and seven sixes.

"I was just thinking I have got an opportunity to bat at number three and I just wanted to express myself," he said.

"We played the brand of cricket we wanted to play," said Suryakumar, who revealed that Varma had requested a promotion up the batting order. "He asked for it and he responded," said the captain.

Fellow left-hander Abhishek Sharma was similarly aggressive, hitting 50 off 25 balls with three fours and five sixes in a second-wicket stand of 107 off 52 deliveries with Varma.

South Africa were never up with the required run rate but some big hitting by Heinrich Klaasen (41) and Jansen (54) enabled the hosts to score 105 runs off the last seven overs.

Klaasen hit three sixes off successive balls from leg-spinner Varun Chakravarthy, India's most successful bowler in the first two matches.

Jansen thrashed a 16-ball half-century before falling leg before wicket to left-arm opening bowler Arshdeep Singh off the third ball of the final over.

Put under pressure by Abhishek and Varma, South Africa bowled three no-balls and 10 wides, which ultimately proved the difference between the two teams, with India bowling only one wide. - AFP

Alcaraz outclasses Rublev, Ruud loses

CARLOS ALCARAZ opened his account at the ATP Finals on Wednesday with an entertaining 6-3, 7-6 (10-8) win over Andrey Rublev, while Casper Ruud missed an early chance to reach the semifinals after losing in straight sets 7-6 (7-3), 6-3 to Alexander Zverev yesterday.

World No. 3 Alcaraz comfortably defeated Rublev to lift himself off the bottom of the John Newcombe Group and looked in much better form despite struggling with fatigue and illness in the lead-up to the match.

There had been some doubt as to whether Alcaraz, who lost his opening match in straight sets to Ruud, would continue in Turin after quickly ending his training session on Tuesday, with his coach Juan Carlos Ferrero saying that he had trouble breathing.

"I could be better, I'm not going to lie," said Alcaraz on court after beating Rublev.

"I've been struggling with my health the last week and today I thought I was going to feel better. I was OK

to play, but thinking about the first match I was thinking a lot about that I was sick, that I couldn't play.

"Today I really wanted to step on the court and just think about tennis, try to play a high level... When I played the first match I felt like I did not entertain the people, I did not play good tennis."

Rublev meanwhile, drops to last place after losing his sixth straight Finals match, although he put up a battle and had two opportunities to win the second set.

Alcaraz winning in straight sets meant that Ruud would have reached the semifinals with a match to spare if he had beaten two-time Finals champion Alexander Zverev in the day's late match.

"I think it was a very good match actually from both of us," said Zverev on court.

"I'm happy to win today but it was very, very close. One or two points decided the first set and I thought the level was very high from both of us." - AFP

Sri Lanka beat New Zealand to go 1-0 up in series

KUSAL MENDIS and Avishka Fernando both slammed centuries to set up a convincing 45-run victory for Sri Lanka in the rain-interrupted first one-day international against New Zealand on Wednesday.

Kusal, 29, struck a career-best 143 and Avishka hit 100 as Sri Lanka posted a commanding 324-5 in 49.2 overs before rain stopped play.

New Zealand, chasing a revised target of 221 off 27 overs, were restricted to 175-9 in the day-night game played at Dambulla.

The Kiwis started off confidently but then lost five wickets in less than five overs for the addition of just 22 runs.

It was Maheesh Theekshana who triggered the collapse with the wickets of openers Will Young and Tim Robinson, who shared an 88-run stand off just 79 balls.

Robinson fell to a sharp stumping by Kusal, and four balls later, Theekshana bowled Young to swing the momentum towards Sri Lanka.

From there on, it was downhill all the way for the visitors as the rest of the batsmen failed to live up to

the task.

"When you lose two set guys, it can be difficult on these wickets," said Kiwi skipper Mitchell Santner.

"We tried to keep firing shots, but if you lose wickets in clumps, it's a challenge."

Earlier, Kusal and Avishka stitched together a 206-run stand off 215 balls for the highest second-wicket partnership in ODIs for Sri Lanka against New Zealand.

Their effort eclipsed a 21-year-old record held by Sanath Jayasuriya and Hashan Tillakaratne, who added 170 against the Black Caps in the 2003 World Cup in Bloemfontein.

The stand was also the highest partnership for any wicket at Dambulla in ODIs.

"I thought it will be tough for us (with the wet ball) and it also didn't turn too much," said Sri Lankan captain Charith Asalanka.

"Avishka and Kusal batted really well and the best thing was that both of them scored hundreds."

The ODI action will next move to Pallekele where the remaining two games of the series will be played on Sunday and Tuesday. - AFP

TRAMLINES

Forlan tennis debut ends in defeat

FORMER Uruguay striker Diego Forlan swung and missed on court with Argentina's Federico Cori as his tennis doubles debut ended in defeat, losing 6-1 6-2 to Bolivia's Boris Arias and Federico Zeballos at the Uruguay Open on Wednesday.

The 45-year-old Forlan buckled under the pressure as the duo were outplayed by the dynamic Bolivian pair, managing just 27 points in the 47-minute match.

It was a stark contrast to the roaring applause from the sell-out crowd at the Carrasco Lawn Tennis Centre, who were hoping to see the same magic that Forlan once produced on the court.

"I enjoyed it quite a lot. I knew that the possibility of it being a difficult game for us was very high. I was happy. It's not easy at all. I played an exhibition in 2017 and 2018 and I didn't have the experience of today," an upbeat Forlan told a press conference.

Forlan has competed in more than three +40 tournaments in Montevideo, also standing out in the MT1000 in Lima of the ITF World Tennis Masters Tour, however, his transition from football prodigy to tennis novice will require a few more practice sets.

The Challenger Tour event continues in Montevideo from Nov 11-17.

Swiatek's BJK Cup opener postponed

THE start of the Billie Jean King Cup finals yesterday in Malaga was postponed after a weather warning in the wake of recent devastating floods in Spain.

Hosts Spain were due to face world No. 2 Iga Swiatek's Poland in the afternoon but organisers pushed the tie back to today "due to a severe weather alert issued by local and regional authorities".

"This decision has been made based on guidance from the relevant authorities to ensure the health and safety of all participants and attendees," said the International Tennis Federation (ITF) in a statement.

The Billie Jean King and Davis Cups, billed as the World Cup of women's and men's tennis respectively, are both being held in Malaga this month, with Spanish superstar Rafa Nadal playing in his last competition before he retires.

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF VISTA ABRASIVE SDN. BHD.
(Registration No. 198901010499 (187801-U))
(IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Members held on Monday, 11 November 2024 at 11.00 a.m., the following resolutions were duly passed:-

1. **SPECIAL RESOLUTION**
That the Company be liquidated by way of members' voluntary winding up pursuant to Section 439(1)(b) of the Companies Act 2016.

2. **SPECIAL RESOLUTION**
That Looi Soi Har @ Looi Bak Ong of No.10-1, Jalan BKSA/38, Bandar Kinrara, 47100 Puchong, Selangor Darul Ehsan be appointed as liquidator to act for the purpose of winding up the Company's affairs and distributing its assets.

3. **SPECIAL RESOLUTION**
That the liquidator of the Company be hereby authorised to exercise the powers given by Section 436 of the Companies Act 2016 and to distribute to members in specie any parts of the assets of the Company.

LOOI SOI HAR @ LOOI BAK ONG
Company Director
Dated this 15 November 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF VISTA ABRASIVE SDN. BHD.
(Registration No. 198901010499 (187801-U))
(IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

Notice is hereby given that the creditors of the abovesaid Company which is being voluntarily wound up, are required, on or before 15 December 2024 to send in their names and addresses with particulars of their debts and claims, and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned, Looi Soi Har @ Looi Bak Ong of No.10-1, Jalan BKSA/38, Bandar Kinrara, 47100 Puchong, Selangor Darul Ehsan, the liquidator of the abovesaid Company, and if so required by notice in writing from the said liquidator, are, by their solicitors or personally to come in and prove their said debts and claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice, or in default thereof, they will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts and claims are proved.

LOOI SOI HAR @ LOOI BAK ONG
Liquidator
Dated this 15 November 2024

De Ligt annoyed about Ten Hag's dismissal and his part in it

MANCHESTER UNITED centreback Matthijs de Ligt feels bitter about the dismissal of the club's manager Erik ten Hag last month and annoyed over the penalty decision that ultimately cost his compatriot his job.

A lengthy VAR review showed De Ligt had clipped the leg of West Ham United's Danny Ings, a decision that left Ten Hag shaking his head and earned the London side a penalty to secure a last-gasp 2-1 win.

Ten Hag was fired the following day. "Normally, I am always self-critical and can get annoyed about things I don't do well. But this was not my fault, I couldn't blame myself for it," De Ligt told reporters in the Netherlands yesterday, where he is preparing for Nations League matches with the Dutch national team.

"The referees' committee also called us to say that it was not a penalty," he added.

Howard Webb, the chief refereeing officer of the

Premier League, admitted on Tuesday that West Ham United were wrongly awarded a penalty.

"He (Ten Hag) has not been very lucky. We played well in many games, but we did not take advantage of the chances we got. It is a shame that it had to end like that," added De Ligt.

The 25-year-old moved from Bayern Munich in August, having previously worked with Ten Hag at Ajax Amsterdam.

"He brought me to Manchester, the goal was to

achieve success together with Erik."

De Ligt has not had any contact with new manager Ruben Amorim, who started his job on Monday after being lured from Portuguese champions Sporting Lisbon.

"He did well at Sporting. Hopefully, he can also help us move up a notch. Amorim is not my first coach and he will not be my last coach. I did not just move to Manchester United for Ten Hag," the defender said. - Reuters

TOUCHLINES

MAN UNITED and Arsenal are battling to sign former Man City winger Leroy Sané from Bayern Munich, with the 28-year-old Germany international out of contract next summer.

UNITED are considering a January transfer move for Dinamo Zagreb and Croatia midfielder Martin Baturina, 21, who has also been watched by Barcelona and Atletico.

THE Red Devils are keen on Bournemouth's 21-year-old Hungarian leftback Milos Kerkez.

LIVERPOOL remain in talks with 32-year-old Egypt forward Mohamed Salah over a potential new contract but the parties are currently far apart on any deal.

THE Reds are considering a move for in-form PSV Eindhoven striker Ricardo Pepi, with the 21-year-old United States international also on the radar of Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund and Atletico Madrid.

ARSENAL are monitoring Real Sociedad and Spain midfielder Martin Zubimendi's situation, in the belief they can prove the most viable destination for the 25-year-old.

BARCELONA and Real Madrid are keeping an eye on Nottingham Forest's Brazilian centreback Murillo, 22.

WEST HAM are looking at Botafogo and Brazil forward Igor Jesus, 23, as an option to strengthen their attacking options.

NEWCASTLE chiefs remain relaxed over Sweden striker Alexander Isak's contract status, despite fresh claims the 25-year-old is unsettled at the club.

TOTTENHAM have started the process to activate the clause to extend 32-year-old forward Son Heung-min's contract until June 2026.

CHELSEA have put Benfica's 22-year-old Portugal defender Tomas Araujo and Bournemouth's Ukraine centre-back Illia Zabarnyi, 22, on their list of potential defensive targets.

McIlroy aims for glory

Irishman motivated to keep pace with Scheffler, Schauffele in Dubai

Rory McIlroy. -
USATODAYPIC



RORY MCILROY gave himself an eight out of 10 for the 2024 season that promised much but delivered only two titles, but on a Dubai course where he has always brought his A-game, things can get a lot better come Sunday.

Only one player in the field - Thriston Lawrence - has enough points to prevent the world No. 3 from winning a sixth DP World Tour Order of Merit crown to match Spanish legend Seve Ballesteros and get closer to Colin Montgomerie's all-time record of eight.

However, the South African's only chance is to win the title and hope that McIlroy finishes tied for 11th or worse.

McIlroy leads Lawrence by 1,785.02 points after finishing tied third last week in Abu Dhabi.

The winner at the season-ending US\$10 million (RM45m) DP World Tour Championship receives 2,000 points and the runner-up gets 1,335 points.

However, McIlroy rules the Greg Norman-designed Earth course with an iron fist.

He may have won only twice in 13 starts, but he is a combined 179-under-par in 13 starts (3.44-under-par each round), with two wins in 2012 and 2015 and seven other top-six finishes.

In the 56 rounds he has played on the course, he has shot only four over-par rounds.

Only one player has a better record than McIlroy on this course - Jon Rahm - and he is not in the field.

McIlroy said he was aiming to win the tournament for the third time and not to share the 18th green on Sunday with any other player.

Last year, he had already wrapped up the Order of Merit before Dubai and had a lacklustre

outing, finishing tied for 22nd - his worst result in the tournament. Denmark's Nicolai Hojgaard won the biggest prize on the DP World Tour.

"I think it's a nice time to reflect on the year when you come here and you're on the cusp of doing something that, to me, is still pretty meaningful, and just thinking about the body of work you've put together over the last 10 or 11 months," said McIlroy, who won the Hero Dubai Desert Classic at Emirates Golf Club in January this year.

"When you get to the business end of things at the end of the year, you start to realise at least I've put together a year that I'm pretty proud of, even if it hasn't culminated in some of the things that I've wanted to achieve."

McIlroy has failed to add to the number of majors under his belt, which is why he said his season was just a pass.

He said he had been "incredibly consistent" but "thinking about the ones that got away. I could be sitting up here with a fifth major title and I am not. So that stings and that's something that I have to come to terms with."

"You've got two guys at the top of the World Rankings with Xander (Schauffele) winning two majors and Scottie (Scheffler) winning a Masters and a Players and the Olympics.

"They certainly separated themselves from the pack this year. I'm very aware of that, and it only makes me more motivated to try to emulate what they did this year"

Lawrence has his own score to settle with the course. He made three birdies in his final three holes on Sunday of last year's DP World Tour Championship, but that fell agonisingly short by one shot in his effort to secure one of the 10 PGA Tour cards on offer.

At least he won't have to worry about that as he is guaranteed to be in the top 10 regardless of his finish this week.

Only the top 50 players from the DP World Tour's season-long Race to Dubai qualify for the DP World Tour Championship. - AFP

Fernandes hopeful Amorim can turn around United

MANCHESTER UNITED captain Bruno Fernandes believes new boss Ruben Amorim can have the same massive impact at Old Trafford that the young manager had at Portuguese club Sporting.

Amorim, 39, arrived at United's training base Carrington on Monday, a day after his final match with Sporting - a 4-2 league victory over Braga.

It was Sporting's 11th successive win as they seek to clinch back-to-back Primeira Liga titles for the first time since the 1950s.

Sporting went almost 20 years without winning the league until Amorim led them to the

title in 2021 and the club's transformation impressed many, including compatriot Fernandes.

"I hope he does the same here because you know sometimes a person can change the energy of a space, if it's the right moment," Fernandes told United's in-house media.

"We hope that he can come, and this is the right moment for him to come and bring his energy, bring his qualities and his knowledge of football, because he's done something really, really special at Sporting.

"If someone doubts that, it's about just looking at the past. Sporting (went) about 20 years without winning the league, and he got back to win the league, and he won it two times in four years with a really youthful team, in a moment of change."

Fans may have to be patient in waiting to see United take their rivals apart in such a manner but Fernandes backed Amorim to find a way to mould the team in his style.

"He's a really smart manager that has done really good things for Sporting tactically,"

Fernandes said.

"But obviously as we always say, you can't bring or transform what he has done at Sporting into here, because you have different players, you have different ways of playing and everything."

"I'm pretty sure that the idea of football he has, independent of the way he wants to play, is going to be a good one and it's going to bring us success."

Amorim's first United game in charge is a league clash away at Ipswich Town on Nov 24. - Reuters



Another clean sheet for Onana

MANCHESTER UNITED goalkeeper Andre Onana kept a fourth clean sheet for Cameroon yesterday in Africa Cup of Nations (Afc) qualifying, and Equatorial Guinea and Ivory Coast clinched finals places.

Cameroon, lacking several stars including Brentford forward Bryan Mbeumo and Napoli midfielder Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa, drew 0-0 with Namibia in Group J in Soweto near Johannesburg.

A foot discomfort ruled out Mbeumo while Zambo Anguissa missed the matchday 5 clash due to undisclosed "family reasons".

Already eliminated Namibia had 15 goal attempts, but only one on target against Onana, who has conceded only once in five qualifiers.

Cameroon, who clinched a place at the 2025 finals in Morocco by defeating Kenya twice last month, have 11 points with a home fixture against Zimbabwe to come on Nov 19.

By holding Cameroon, Namibia secured their first point of a disappointing campaign

Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea book Cup of Nations berths without playing

having reached the last 16 at an Afcon for the first time in the Ivory Coast this year.

Zimbabwe play Kenya on Saturday (12.01am Malaysian time) and a draw will ensure they finish at least second and accompany Cameroon to the 24-team tournament.

A victory for Kenya will take them within one point of Zimbabwe, and keep alive hopes of a first Afcon appearance since 2019.

Holders Ivory Coast and Equatorial Guinea became the latest countries to qualify for next year's Africa Cup of Nations finals but did not have to kick a ball to do so, as the penultimate round of qualifiers began yesterday.

The Ivorians, winners at the last finals which they hosted at the start of the year, are certain of finishing in the top two places in Group G after Sierra Leone were held to a 1-1 draw by Chad in Abidjan.

The Ivorians sit on nine points from four matches, with Zambia second in the group on seven from four. Sierra Leone have five points with one game to play and Chad are eliminated.

Chad moved the clash to the Ivory Coast because they are one of 18 countries barred from hosting international matches because of the poor state of their stadia.

They went a goal behind to Abu-Diaby Dumbuya's stunning 29th-minute effort but equalised with a Panenka-style penalty from defender Mahamat Thiam five minutes later.

A 1-0 win for Liberia over Togo in Monrovia in Group E eliminated both countries and guaranteed Equatorial Guinea progress to the tournament in Morocco, which is to be played from Dec 21, 2025 to Jan 18, 2026. The top two sides in each of the 12 qualifying groups advance to the finals.

Equatorial Guinea, who were a surprise package at the last finals, sit on seven points from their four matches, while Liberia who have four points from five games and Togo have two.

Even if Liberia finish with same points tally as Equatorial Guinea, they cannot overhaul them in the standings because of the head-to-head record between the two.

Equatorial Guinea beat Liberia home and away last month, but yesterday substitute Mohammed Sangare, who came through the ranks at Newcastle United but now plays his club football in Switzerland, tucked away an 83rd-minute penalty to ensure Liberia's first win of the group.

It was also a maiden victory for caretaker coach Thomas Kojo, drafted in last month after Romanian Mario Marinica was fired. – AFP/Reuters

SHORTS

Ranieri set to return to Roma

CLAUDIO RANIERI is set to take charge of his hometown team Roma, coming out of retirement to become the Serie A club's third coach of a troubled season.

Ranieri, who won the Premier League title with Leicester City in 2016, has reportedly agreed a deal until the end of the season with Roma following negotiations in London.

Italian media reported that Ranieri could be offered a backroom role within the club once his tenure as coach is over in June.

Ranieri effectively confirmed his appointment to reporters after he landed in Rome yesterday, suggesting that Roma had contacted him as a problem solver for their current dire situation.

The 73-year-old replaces Ivan Juric, who was hired in September following the dismissal of former captain Daniele De Rossi but was sacked after Sunday's 3-2 home defeat at the hands of Bologna.

PL clubs 'seeking compensation' if City found guilty

ARSENAL, Liverpool, Manchester United and Tottenham have reportedly lodged legal notices reserving the right to claim compensation if Manchester City are found to have breached Premier League financial rules.

The *Times* said the notices had been lodged now over concerns that the clubs could be out of time to do so under the statute of limitations if they waited for an outcome in the case.

City were charged with 115 breaches of top-flight rules in February last year, charges which the club have always strenuously denied.

An independent commission hearing in the case began on

Sept 16 at the International Dispute Resolution Centre in London.

The hearing was reported at the time to be scheduled for 10 weeks. No outcome is expected until the New Year.

The clubs are reported to have been advised that the six-year statute of limitations could potentially date back to November 2018, when German magazine *Der Spiegel* first published allegations against City, prompting the Premier League to open an investigation.

The *Times* said the clubs could look to claim compensation under the league's arbitration rules in the event City are found guilty of some of the serious charges facing them.

PGMOL taking new Coote allegations seriously

ENGLISH football referees' body the PGMOL said yesterday it was taking new allegations against David Coote very seriously and European soccer body Uefa said it had suspended the Premier League referee.

The *Sun* published a video yesterday that the newspaper said showed Coote appearing to snort white powder during his time working as a match official at Euro 2024.

The video has not been verified by Reuters.

"We are aware of the allegations and are taking them very seriously. David Coote remains suspended pending a full investigation," a PGMOL spokesperson said.

"David's welfare continues to be of utmost importance to us and we are committed to providing him with the ongoing necessary support he needs through this period."

Reuters has approached Coote, through the PGMOL, for comment.

Uefa said that it had taken action against Coote earlier in the week.

Kane disappointed by England withdrawals

HARRY KANE says he is disappointed by the high number of withdrawals from the England squad this week, insisting the national team must come first.

Asked if there was one thing former manager Gareth Southgate put in place that senior players need to ensure is not lost, the striker told *ITV*: "I think the joy to play for England. I think he brought that back."

"I think every camp people were excited to come, every camp people wanted to play for England and, yeah, that's the most important thing."

"I think England comes before anything. England comes before club."

The Bayern Munich forward said it was a "shame" that so many players had withdrawn.

"It's a tough period of the season and maybe that's been taken advantage of a little bit," he said.

"I don't really like it if I'm totally honest. I think

England comes before anything, any club situation."

Eight players withdrew from Carseley's initial 26-man squad for the Nations League double-header, including Declan Rice, Phil Foden, Bukayo Saka and Cole Palmer. Jarrod Branthwaite was among five players brought into the squad but Everton

centreback did not travel to Greece, with Liverpool's Jarell Quansah called up in his place.

Carseley insisted he was simply focusing on the players available to him.

"The focus all camp has been on the players that are here," he said. "It is important that we make the most of this situation."

"With the amount of players that have pulled out, it gives other players the opportunity to be here. We're looking forward to the game."

Carseley, who will return to his job coaching the England Under-21s after the Nations League games, sought to sidestep Kane's comments and said the drop-outs were not unusual at this time of year.

"I think it's his opinion. I can only deal with what's in front of us."

"With the amount of pull-outs we've had in this window, historically it has been like that in the past. November has always been a challenging window," Carseley said.

"Look at the players we've brought in," he added. "It is really a proud moment for them. The focus is on the players that are here, not the ones that aren't" – AFP



Harry Kane. – AFP/PICT

Belgium make new bid to persuade Courtois to return

A new bid to break the impasse between Belgium coach Domenico Tedesco and Thibaut Courtois has been made but there is time frame for when the Real Madrid goalkeeper may return to the team, Tedesco said yesterday.

Courtois has not played for Belgium since June last year when he had a falling out with the coach after not being appointed captain for a European Championship qualifier in Estonia.

Although he suffered a serious knee injury and missed most of last season, Courtois did return to help Real win the

Champions League before sitting out Euro 2024 in Germany.

In August, the 32-year-old Courtois, who has won 102 caps, confirmed he would no longer play for Belgium as long as Tedesco was coach but new Belgian football association chief executive officer Peter Willemss has travelled to Madrid to try and persuade him to reconsider.

"He informed me some weeks ago about it, so I knew (about the talks)," Tedesco said yesterday.

"He (Willemss) asked me what do you think about it? For me, first of all, he has all the rights to do that as a CEO,

of course. And second, I was always and I'm still completely open to it. I think that on this topic, everything has been discussed."

Willemss told local reporters on Tuesday that Tedesco was "absolutely the right man in the right place" but that he was eager to solve the Courtois issue.

In a statement on social media in August, Courtois said: "Unfortunately, following the events with the coach and after much reflection, I have decided not to return to the Belgian national team under his management." – Reuters

Wan Rohaimi takes charge of Panthers

FORMER national striker Wan Rohaimi Wan Ismail has been appointed as the new head coach of Penang FC, ending speculation about the vacancy left by Akmal Rizal Ahmad Rakhli, who had been sidelined for the past few weeks.

Penang FC Chairman Daniel Gooi Zi Sen said that Wan Rohaimi will take charge of the Panthers in their Super League campaign until the end of the 2024/25 season.

He expressed confidence that the 48-year-old coach's extensive experience in local football will elevate Penang FC's performance and standing in the league.

"Under Wan Rohaimi's leadership, Penang FC are expected to adopt a play style emphasising ball possession. He is known for fostering strategic thinking among players and prioritising physical fitness, aligning with the goal of building a strong and competitive team."

"With this appointment, Penang FC are confident that Wan Rohaimi will bring new vision and strategies that will strengthen the team and improve Penang FC's position in the Super League," Gooi said at a press conference to announce the new coach at Komtar yesterday.

Gooi added that the club is open to extending Wan Rohaimi's contract if he meets the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) set by the management and also called for fan support to boost the team's morale under the new coach.

Regarding Akmal Rizal's status, Gooi said that Akmal is now assisting in coaching the Penang FC U-23 team as he remains under contract until the end of the season.

Meanwhile, Wan Rohaimi expressed his deep connection to Penang, having played for Penang FC in 2003 and coached the Under-21 team in 2020 and thus this background made it an easy decision to accept the offer to lead the Panthers.

Despite acknowledging the significant challenge of shaping the team, the former national striker is confident that his knowledge and experience will bring positive changes.

"Penang FC have the potential... I have closely followed the team's progress. It's just that perhaps the players have yet to show their true quality, and my task is to uncover that missing quality."

"I have a week before my first match, which is the Malaysia Cup meeting against Kuching City FC on Nov 21, and I hope to have ample training sessions with the team to implement my playing style," said Wan Rohaimi, who previously coached PDRM FC. – Bernama

Mental, motivational factors influenced divers' performance at Paris 2024

THE performance of the national divers, who once again returned empty-handed at the 2024 Paris Olympics, was not due to a lack of support in the preparation phase for the prestigious global sports event.

National diving team Technical Director Bryan Nickson Lomas said the team received full support in preparing its divers, Bertrand Rhodict Lises, who made his Olympic debut at the age of 19, and elite diver Nur Dhabitah Sabri.

However, according to Bryan, mental and motivational factors were seen as influencing the performances of both athletes.

"The support was all okay, ISN (National Sports Institute) provided full support, (in terms of) training camps, funding, and services were all top-notch. But we felt something was missing, especially for Rhodict, due to the absence of friends during the training camp."

"He was really excited but it was his first time going abroad for a training camp without the friends he was familiar with, so that was one factor."

"For Bitah (Dhabitah), our ultimate goal was to make it to the final, so perhaps in the final she was looking forward to what's next. In terms of her preparation for the final push, it did not materialise as expected, so that was the situation," he said when met during the Post-Mortem Session for the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games at the National Sports Council (MSN) yesterday.

Bryan added that the national diving team's next focus would be the 2024 World Junior Aquatics Championships in Rio de Janeiro, scheduled to take place from Nov 24 to Dec 1, before shifting their attention to the 2025 World Aquatics Championships. – Bernama

KBS to empower sports TVET, says Youth and Sports minister

THE Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS) will continue to empower Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in sports as an effort to produce more skilled workers in the country's sports industry.

To realise the aspiration, Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh said KBS will transform the National Youth Skills Institute (IKBN) in Kuala Langat into the National Sports Skills Institute (IKSN) next year to provide the necessary education and upskilling in the field of sports technology in Malaysia.

Yeoh said among the programmes that can attract attention in Sports TVET education at IKSN are in the field of construction and maintenance of sports facilities, sports motoring and sports photography.

"We need time (to introduce TVET Sports) but it is a good start. Even though we want to try it now, we have to make sure that the instructors are ready," she said after attending the Sports TVET Engagement Session in conjunction with the Skills Symposium of the Institute of Youth and Sports Skills Training (ILKBS) 2024 (SKIL'24) near Puchong on Wednesday.

Yeoh said the introduction of Sports TVET could also reduce the country's dependence on foreign expertise and help reduce number of foreign workers in the sports industry.

Yeoh had earlier said Sports TVET will be more sports-related: "... for example, we have already offered skills in sports massage, golf caddying... So, we are exploring all sports science-related TVET programmes to

ensure that the direction is focused."

She said the reduction of the foreign workforce at sports facilities is also seen as able to reduce the cost of workers' wages, thus ensuring that the price of access to sports remains affordable and does not burden fans.

On Wednesday's engagement session, Yeoh said it was aimed at gathering feedback from stakeholders comprising the industry, sports associations and lead agencies to ensure that the planned Sports TVET is in line with the needs of the industry.

She said the ministry is focusing on empowering youth with skills that can provide income, such as the KLAS Renang programme which provides free swimming lessons for B40 youths and a career for former swimmers. – Bernama



National squash player S. Sivasangari (right) in action against Egypt's Nour Heikal. – BERNAMAPIIC

London Classic champion to play Aifa in Malaysia Squash Cup 2024 last eight

NATIONAL women's squash champion S. Sivasangari lived up to her billing when she easily advanced to the quarterfinals of the Ace Malaysia Squash Cup 2024 on Wednesday.

In the second round, Sivasangari needed only 23 minutes to defeat world No. 62 Nour Heikal from Egypt (11-4, 11-5, 11-9) to register a 3-0 score at the at The Curve in Damansara.

Waiting for the London Classic champion in the quarterfinals is national compatriot Aifa Azman who defeated Cristina Gomez of Spain 3-0 (11-4, 11-4, 11-4)

"This is the first match of the tournament

in Malaysia and overall I think I've played very well and strengthened my shots towards end of the game. Happy with the way I played and managed to finish in three sets as we all know all these Egyptian players they're fighters," the world No. 9 told reporters after the match.

Meanwhile, Aifa expects a stiff competition when playing against the country's No. 1 women's squash player in the quarterfinal today.

"The last time I played her was in the national championship two years ago where I lost 1-3. Of course it will be a fierce competition, in addition she is also now ranked in the top 10 (best in the world) but I

am ready to take on the challenge," she said.

Earlier on Wednesday, another national women's representative, Aira Azman, who is also Aifa's sister, advanced to the quarterfinals after defeating Australia's Sarah Cardwell 3-1 (11-6, 9-11, 11-4, 11-4) to set up a date against Scotland's Georgina Adderley.

Held on a high-tech glass court at The Curve Shopping Mall, this Bronze-level event on the Professional Squash Association (PSA) World Tour Series runs from Nov 12-17, with matches at The Curve and the National Sports Centre (NSC) in Jalan Duta, offering a prize pool of US\$100,000 (RM443,566). – Bernama

Aaron-Wooi Yik eliminated, Nur Azriyn-Wee Kiong shine at Masters Japan

THE campaign of top national men's doubles Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik at the Kumamoto Masters Japan 2024 came to a halt in the second round after they were beaten by the Taiwanese pair Chiu Hsiang Chieh-Wang Chi-Lin yesterday.

In action at the Kumamoto Prefectural Gymnasium, Hsiang-Chieh-Chi-Lin managed to defeat Aaron-Wooi Yik who are the fourth seeds of the tournament 11-21, 13-21 in 26 minutes.

The result sees Aaron-Wooi Yik's hopes of making the BWF World Tour Finals in Hangzhou

slim as the pair need to at least make it to the semifinals of the 2024 Kumamoto Masters Japan to accumulate enough points to Hangzhou.

Last week, the pair ranked sixth in the world won the Korea Masters 2024 by defeating the host pair Jin Yong-Kim Won-ho 21-23, 21-19, 21-14.

Meanwhile, Nur Azriyn Ayub-Tan Wee Kiong upset their stronger compatriots Goh Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin Rumsani in straight sets

21-9, 23-21.

Waiting for Azriyn-Wee Kiong, ranked 40th in the world, in the quarterfinal are Hsiang Chieh-Chi Lin today.

In the men's singles, Leong Jun Hao shocked Japanese player Koki Watanabe with a 21-10, 16-21, 21-13 victory.

Jun Hao is scheduled to face another tough challenger, Kodai Naraoka who is the tournament's second seed in the quarterfinals today. – Bernama



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SCAN ME



National sprinter Zaidatul Husniah Zulkifli. - BERNAMAPIC

Sports revolution

THE rapid advancement of digital transformation today requires nations to adapt artificial intelligence (AI) technology to remain competitive.

The use of AI is seen not as an option but almost a necessity to prevent nations or societies from falling behind in this modern and sophisticated era.

AI, powered by the ability of computer systems to perform tasks typically done by humans, relies on algorithms to analyse vast amounts of data needed for optimal performance.

This trend extends to sports, where AI technology is increasingly being used not just by teams but also by athletes to enhance their performance.

From devices to applications, it is undeniable that the use of AI, often undetectable by the human eye, is now changing the global sports landscape.

For sprinter Zaidatul Husniah Zulkifli, she acknowledges that AI technology through the use of a smart watch has greatly helped her maintain her performance as she enters her 31st year.

Zaidatul, affectionately known as Adeq, said she has relied heavily on a smart watch from a leading Chinese brand since last year to optimise her rest periods during training, whether at the gym or on the track.

"I received this smart watch as a reward for winning bronze in the women's 4x100 metres at the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games, and since then, I've been using this device, especially during training sessions.

"Since the smart watch can read my heart rate, it notifies me of any changes and such. Interestingly, the smart watch also alerts me if I sit or stand too long, reminding me to resume training," she told *Bernama*.

The women's 100m national record holder said the device also provides guidance on using rest periods effectively after completing runs according to set distances.

"Every time I run 150m, for instance, the watch informs me of how long I need to rest, such as eight minutes before

Artificial intelligence today is used by teams and athletes to enhance performances

continuing with training," she said.

The Kedah-born athlete said that her current smart watch is the best sports device she has ever owned, as it not only helps her manage her time but also saving charging time with a battery life of six days compared to another similar device she owns from a different brand, which only lasts one day.

Meanwhile, former Harimau Malaya head coach Tan Cheng Hoe

admitted that the emergence of technology devices powered by AI in the current global sports landscape has been proven to simplify coaches' decision-making both on and off the field.

According to Cheng Hoe, some equipment he has used includes GPS vests and other devices for monitoring player performance, condition, and fitness.

He noted that the data collected is crucial to ensure that all decisions made benefit not only the individual players but also the team as a whole.

"Thirty years ago, we relied on players' facial expressions to gauge fatigue, but now we can monitor fitness levels using GPS trackers.

"I don't use AI 100 per cent but employ it to gather player data, especially during training sessions and match days," he said.

Cheng Hoe said that the data obtained allows him to plan training sessions more effectively to ensure his team is at its best.

"But we also can't rely solely on AI because it only serves as a guide; the actual insight comes from the coach

himself," he added.

Former national men's hockey coach A. Arul Selvaraj said live video assistance technology during matches when he led the Speedy Tigers helped him analyse players' performance on the pitch.

Although there is an AI element in the technology, he still relies on human input to monitor the video to ensure that the decisions made are precise and effective.

"In hockey (in Malaysia), I am unsure how extensively AI is used, but I have mostly used GPS tracking and heart rate monitoring systems," he said.

Arul Selvaraj, who now resides in Ireland, revealed that some hockey clubs there have begun using more advanced AI technology compared to what is available in Malaysia.

He said that technology used in Ireland through match video recordings not only tracks players' mistakes but also ball movement.

However, the former UniKL hockey team coach noted that the use of AI in hockey at the international level is not as advanced compared to football, where some teams in Belgium have cameras installed throughout stadiums to monitor movements and conduct live analysis of players.

While acknowledging the benefits of technology, Arul Selvaraj, echoing Cheng Hoe's view, said these tools cannot be fully relied on, as their effectiveness still depends on the coach's expertise and how players adapt to decisions, including tactical changes, to achieve positive outcomes in matches. - *Bernama*



Tan Cheng Hoe. - BERNAMAPIC



Varma hits **INDIA** maiden century

Story on page 28



McIlroy aims for glory

Story on page 29



Another clean sheet for Onana

Story on page 30