



Bitter truth behind sugar dating

Report on
page 5

Increase in transactional relationships driven by economic pressures, materialism and erosion of traditional values, says UKM senior lecturer.

'Pay according to qualifications, expertise and job roles'

Report on
page 3

Workers with skills certificates, diplomas should earn more than minimum wage and be paid according to technical abilities: MTUC chief

Call for strict compliance of workplace safety laws

Report on
page 4

Academic suggests more inspections and higher penalties for errant companies in quarry, construction industries.



Anwar said a tariff hike of less than 14% is reasonable as part of government efforts to allocate more funds for development and implementation of programmes of public interest. - ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

Costlier energy for industries, super rich

Electricity tariff hike set to take effect on July 1 will not affect 85% of consumers in accordance with Imbalance Cost Pass-Through mechanism, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Report on
page 2

King assents to seven Bills passed by Parliament

KUALA LUMPUR: His Majesty the King of Malaysia Sultan Ibrahim has consented to seven Bills passed in the Third Meeting of the Third Session of the 15th Parliament held from Oct 14 to Dec 12.

The announcement was made by Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul before the start of the Ministerial Question Time session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He said the Bills are the Supply Act 2025 (Budget 2025), Finance Act 2024, Measures for the Collection, Administration and Enforcement of Tax Act 2024, Labuan Business Activity Tax (Amendment) (No 2) Act 2024, Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases

(Amendment) Act 2024, Communications and Multimedia (Amendment) Act 2024 and the Water Services Industry (Amendment) Act 2024.

Johari urged MPs to set a positive example and demonstrate political maturity throughout the sitting.

He also issued a stern warning that strict action would be taken against any MP who fails to adhere to the Standing Orders of the Dewan Rakyat.

"I urge MPs to set the standard by demonstrating political maturity while upholding the principles of decency and ethics as pledged in the Rukun Negara.

"Furthermore, the royal address by His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Monday serves as a timely reminder of the crucial role played by the honourable members."

The Dewan Rakyat session began with the recitation of the Rukun Negara, including its preamble, in line with the government's decision on July 25, 2023 to officially incorporate the full recitation of the pledge during official ceremonies.

Johari also said he received a message from Dewan Negara President Datuk Awang Bemeo Awang Ali Basah on 26 Bills aimed at amending Acts that were passed without modification

during the last Dewan Negara sitting.

Among the Bills passed were the Sabah Labour Ordinance (Amendment) Bill 2024, Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2024, Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill (No 2) 2024, Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board (Amendment) Bill 2024, Labuan Companies (Amendment) Bill 2024 and the Labuan Trusts (Amendment) Bill 2024.

Also approved were the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities (Amendment) Bill 2024, Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) (Amendment) Bill 2024 and the Data Sharing Bill 2024. – Bernama

Power tariff hike will not affect 85% of population: PM

➤ Increase only applies to industries and super rich, in accordance with Imbalance Cost Pass-Through mechanism

KUALA LUMPUR: The electricity tariff hike, set to be implemented from July 1, will not affect 85% of the population, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the hike would only apply to industries and the super rich, in accordance with the Imbalance Cost Pass-Through (ICPT) mechanism.

Anwar said the hike, which is less than 14%, is reasonable as it is part of government efforts to allocate more funds for development such as schools, hospitals and other programmes of public interest.

"The move to increase electricity tariffs for industries and the super rich is something we insist upon because if we don't tax these groups, how can we increase allocations for schools and hospitals? We have to accept the reality of a reasonable tariff hike for industries and the super rich.

"I told the business community yesterday, we will not compromise. We have to increase the tariffs, but it will not affect 85% of the population. So listen carefully, but not with angry sentiments."

He was replying to a question from Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad (PN-Machang) in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Anwar also rejected Wan Ahmad's notion of an unpredictable or "flip-flop" economy, describing the opposition MP's claims as not based on factual data, Bernama reported.

"The economy is not a show, it is based on facts. The fact is that our investments have increased significantly compared with (the time under) previous prime ministers.



Anwar stressing a point in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. – BERNAMAPIC

"The fact is that our growth rate is encouraging. The fact is that the ringgit is still strengthening despite uncertain geopolitical conditions and tariffs imposed by other countries. Those are the facts, not lies, and we should know the difference."

Currently, the government provides electricity subsidies to over 85% of households. The basic electricity tariff is set by the Energy

Commission under the Incentive-Based Regulation framework and is reviewed every three years.

In addition to the basic tariff, there is the ICPT mechanism, which is reviewed every six months. The ICPT adjusts electricity rates based on actual changes in fuel costs.

The next tariff review is scheduled for July.

New padi floor price to be announced next week

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is expected to announce an increase in the *padi* purchase floor price next week, along with additional subsidies to mitigate the impact of the hike on consumers.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu would table a ministerial paper to announce the increase.

"The rise in the floor price will inevitably lead to an increase in rice prices for consumers. Our challenge is to balance this. While the price of *padi* rises for farmers, we do not want to burden consumers.

"I have already discussed this with the Finance Ministry to ensure that the government will bear the subsidy, preventing an increase in local rice prices for consumers. The government will allocate an additional RM150 million over the next six months to support this effort and the details will be finalised soon," he said in the Dewan Rakyat.

Anwar was replying to a supplementary question from Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Khandee (PN-Beluran), who raised the issue of *padi* farmers' demand for an increase in *padi* purchase floor price to RM1,800 per metric tonne. – Bernama

National Service programme cost cut

KUALA LUMPUR: The cost of implementing the National Service Training Programme 3.0 has been significantly reduced, compared with its previous versions, with an estimated cost of RM2,000 per trainee, said Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin.

He said the first programme had an annual cost of RM565 million for 71,300 participants, while the second cost RM361 million for 20,000 participants.

He added that in contrast, the annual cost of the current programme is RM200 million for over 100,000 participants, as it is now held not only at Territorial Army Regiment camps but also in universities and polytechnics.

He was responding to Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman (Muda-Muar) in the Dewan Rakyat, who had raised concerns about the high cost of the programme and its military training content. – Bernama

Uzbekistan president on two-day official visit to Malaysia

PUTRAJAYA: Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is on a two-day official visit to Malaysia, starting yesterday, marking his first trip to the country since assuming office in December 2016.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement yesterday that Mirziyoyev would be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including seven Cabinet ministers and senior officials.

It said Mirziyoyev would be accorded an official welcome at the Perdana Putra Complex in Putrajaya today, followed by a meeting with

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"Both leaders are expected to review the progress of bilateral relations following Anwar's official visit to Uzbekistan in May 2024."

It said discussions would focus on trade and investment, the *halal* industry, education, connectivity and tourism.

It added that both leaders would exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest, including Malaysia's Asean chairmanship and a joint statement would be issued at the conclusion of the meeting.

Following the bilateral meeting, the leaders will witness the exchange of three MOUs on cooperation in the fields of health, forensic sciences and culture.

"Additionally, four exchange of notes will be signed in the areas of higher education, diplomatic training and the *halal* industry."

Anwar will also host an official luncheon at Seri Perdana for Mirziyoyev.

Both leaders will attend the Malaysia-Uzbekistan Business Forum in Kuala Lumpur, which will provide an opportunity to explore further areas for economic collaboration and

strengthen ties between the business communities of the two countries.

They are also scheduled to attend a dinner hosted by Petronas.

In 2024, Malaysia's total trade with Uzbekistan was RM369.8 million, a slight decline of 13.2% from the RM426.1 million recorded in 2023.

The trade balance is in Malaysia's favour at RM360.3 million.

Last year, Uzbekistan was Malaysia's second largest trading partner among Central Asian countries. – Bernama

Education reform agenda moving forward at all levels

PUTRAJAYA: The Education Reform Agenda planned by the Education Ministry is progressing at all levels to ensure the nation's education system remains relevant and capable of addressing current challenges effectively.

This agenda focuses on six key areas: digitalisation; language; literacy; science, technology, engineering and mathematics; technical and vocational education and training; and preschool education.

"This year, the ministry is focusing on a new education development plan to replace the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 as well as preparing for the school curriculum of 2027.

"The *Generasi Madani* (*GenMadani*) programme is also being implemented in schools as a platform to foster unity and build the character of a civilised, ethical and integrity-driven Malaysian nation," according to a statement by the ministry.

The statement was issued in response to the Royal Address by His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, the King of Malaysia, at the opening ceremony of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the 15th Parliament on Monday.

In the address, His Majesty said the government's efforts to implement reforms in education, technical and vocational training, and youth development would produce a more skilled future generation.

The King also expressed support for initiatives to strengthen family values and community well-being. — Bernama

Former army chief appointed UPMN vice-chancellor

PUTRAJAYA: Former Malaysian Armed Forces chief of staff Lt-Gen Datuk Arman Rumaizi Ahmad has been appointed as the new vice-chancellor of Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM), effective Jan 30.

The Higher Education Ministry said Arman Rumaizi earned a master's degree in social science (defence studies) from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 2012.

Throughout his distinguished military career, he has held several key positions, including assistant chief of staff of personnel services and commander of the second division of the Malaysian infantry.

He also served as a military adviser to the former defence minister from 2014 to 2018.

"With his extensive experience and strong leadership reputation, we are confident that Lt-Gen Datuk Arman Rumaizi will play a pivotal role in leading and strengthening UPNM's governance," said the ministry. — Bernama

Call for wage framework based on skills, qualifications

■ BY HARITH KAMAL
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PETALING JAYA: Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) president Mohd Effendy Abdul Ghani has called for a policy that differentiates salaries based on qualifications, skills and job roles rather than the minimum wage.

"Malaysia should have a wage classification framework to ensure employers compensate workers according to their qualifications and expertise.

"A structured wage scale would prevent the undervaluation of skilled workers and ensure that people are paid fairly for the work they do," he said.

Mohd Effendy was commenting on the recent increase in Malaysia's minimum wage from RM1,500 to RM1,700, which he welcomed as a positive step to support low-waged workers.

However, he said the new minimum wage should not be considered fair pay for all workers

▶ MTUC president urges establishment of structured pay scale policy to prevent skilled workers being underrated

but merely serve as a basic safety net for those with limited education.

"People with higher qualifications and specialised skills, workers with secondary school qualifications and those with skills certificates or diplomas should earn more than the minimum wage and be paid according to their technical expertise.

"Similarly, bachelor's degree holders and professionals such as engineers should receive significantly higher salaries to reflect their knowledge and contributions to industry," he said.

Mohd Effendy urged the government and employers to create a fair and structured wage

system that recognises higher education so skilled employees are not placed under the minimum wage category, as this would discourage young people from upskilling.

He also said with the rise in the minimum salary, strict enforcement is critical to ensure employers adhere to the new law.

"Laws without teeth are merely empty documents, so we need to ensure that every worker receives his rightful wages. Hence, MTUC calls on the Labour Department to act against employers who fail to comply with the new wage rule."

While the wage increase has many benefits, such as boosting consumer spending, he warned that the policy may result in wage compression, where workers

with varying skill levels receive similar pay.

"Wage compression could discourage workers from pursuing higher education or acquiring more skills, so I wish to emphasise the need for additional incentives, such as government-subsidised training programmes to help workers upgrade their skills and move into higher-paying roles.

"Employers must also establish career progression pathways that include salary increments for those who gain additional skills or qualifications. Performance-based wage systems should be introduced to reward workers who acquire them," he said.

Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia human resources and development lecturer Assoc Prof Dr Abdul Rahim Zumrah said while the minimum wage increase is a positive move to help workers cope with the rising cost of living, companies must adapt to changes.

"From the company's perspective, the new policy will increase salary costs, so businesses may adjust employment contracts or explore alternatives such as hiring contract workers or outsourcing non-core roles like security or transport."

However, he stressed that despite these adjustments, employee welfare must remain the priority and as employees are the backbone of any company their well-being should always come first, regardless of salary changes.

The increase in the minimum monthly wage to RM1,700, up from RM1,500, took effect on Feb 1, benefiting a total of 4.37 million workers following official implementation of the minimum wage order.

For businesses with fewer than five employees, the new rate will take effect on Aug 1, allowing time for necessary adjustments in wage structures and operations.

Employers must also comply with the new order to ensure their workers receive at least RM1,700 per month.

Non-compliance is an offence under the National Wages Consultative Council Act 2011 (Act 732) and may result in penalties.



Mohd Effendy urged the government and employers to create a fair and structured wage system that recognises higher education so that skilled employees are not placed under the minimum wage category. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

Govt, Opposition urged to unite in curbing online slander, incitement

KUALA LUMPUR: The government and Opposition have been urged to work together to find effective methods to curb the increasingly rampant culture of slander and incitement online and on social media.

Universiti Teknologi Mara fellow of psychological operations at the centre for media and information warfare studies Dr Noor Nirwandy Mat Noordin believes both sides must collaborate and seek the best solution as slander and incitement, if left unchecked, could threaten

national unity.

"The government must take a firm stance on this issue (culture of online slander) and proactively provide accurate and reliable information.

"The Opposition must also align with this effort. They must take responsibility in curbing this issue for the sake of our country's peace," he said when contacted by Bernama.

His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, the King of Malaysia, in his Royal Address at the First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the 15th Parliament on Monday, expressed concern over this

culture, which has caused confusion, hostility and division among the people.

Noor Nirwandy added that aside from the government, the public must also play a role by refraining from spreading slander and incitement as legal action would surely follow.

Meanwhile, Alliance for a Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye welcomed the King's call to put an end to the culture of slander and incitement on social media to safeguard national unity.

Lee stressed that Malaysia, as a multiracial and multireligious country, must instil the value of mutual respect to prevent division.

"Mutual respect is crucial in our multiracial and multireligious country. We must honour each other's cultures, beliefs and values. Using social media to slander others is not part of Malaysian way of life," he said.

He emphasised the importance of learning from historical events such as the May 13 tragedy, underscoring that fostering harmony is essential

for Malaysia's unity and prosperity.

"We must learn from history to ensure such incidents do not happen again. True unity can only be achieved by embracing the principles of the Rukun Negara in our daily lives."

Lee also urged the government to enforce existing laws and consider new legislation if necessary to tackle hate speech more effectively.

At the same time, he encouraged the younger generation to be wiser and more selective in their use of social media.



Stricter regulations to curb workplace fatalities needed

➤ Frequent checks, higher penalties for non-compliant companies, commitment to employee protection crucial to prevent future tragedies, says lecturer

BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
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PETALING JAYA: Despite having workplace safety laws, inconsistent enforcement and poor compliance continue to put workers at risk in Malaysia's quarry and construction industries, said Universiti Teknologi Mara College of Engineering senior lecturer Dr Nor Azmi Bakhary.

He was commenting on a Jan 24 incident where a 28-year-old assistant mechanic was fatally crushed by a rubber counterweight from a conveyor machine while working at a quarry in Kelantan.

The Kelantan Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) investigation found the lack of safe work procedures as the cause of the worker's death. It said no safe work procedure was established for the Crushing Plant machinery.

"The incident highlights the urgent need for stricter regulations, increased inspections, and higher penalties for non-compliant companies," Nor Azmi said, adding that safety inspections at quarries and construction sites are often scheduled rather than random, causing some companies to comply only when expecting an inspection.

He said more frequent checks could also help identify companies that habitually ignore safety protocols and allow the authorities to take swift action against them. Whistleblower programmes for workers to report violations anonymously would further improve enforcement.

According to the Statistics Department, a total of 324 cases of fatal occupational injuries were recorded in 2023 or 2.05 fatalities per 100,000 workers.

Nor Azmi stressed that fatal accidents not only tarnish the industry's reputation by exposing serious safety lapses, but also create



Nor Azmi said workers who feel unsafe may become less productive while industries may face labour shortages as people seek employment elsewhere. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN

long-term consequences for workforce sustainability and discourage potential workers from joining it.

He added that workplace fatalities also have a psychological impact on existing employees, causing anxiety and fear about their safety and causing them to hesitate to perform high-risk tasks or demand better safety measures.

"Workers who feel unsafe may become less productive while their industry may face labour shortages as people seek employment elsewhere. Stricter safety enforcement, increased awareness, and a genuine commitment to worker protection are crucial to preventing future tragedies."

Nor Azmi said reports from DOSH indicate that the construction industry is among the top industries for workplace fatalities in Malaysia with many accidents occurring due to improper machinery handling, lack of personal protective equipment and poor adherence to occupational safety guidelines.

He said companies must adopt a proactive approach to safety and implement technology-driven monitoring systems such as artificial intelligence-powered surveillance cameras and wearable safety sensors for workers.

"Based on the International Labour Organisation Safety Guidelines, investing in automation where possible to reduce human involvement in dangerous tasks can further enhance workplace safety."

Nor Azmi said high-profile accidents often spark temporary discussions, but lasting change requires sustained pressure from regulators, unions, and the public. If the Jan 24 death is investigated thoroughly, it may lead to policy reviews and stricter enforcement.

"However, genuine reform will require the government to introduce mandatory safety certifications, enforce ongoing safety training for all employees, and hold company executives accountable for safety lapses," he said.

According to the Human Resources Ministry, companies violating the Occupational Safety and Health (Amendment) Act 2022 and the Factories and Machinery Act (Repeal) Act 1967 will face a maximum fine of RM500,000.

Nor Azmi said the International Labour Organisation has emphasised that government agencies like DOSH must be empowered with greater authority to impose heavier fines and shut down repeat offenders.

"Strengthening worker education on safety protocols and ensuring the presence of safety officers at all times could further reduce risks."

"To rebuild trust among employers and employees, companies must commit to transparent safety reporting, improve working conditions, and demonstrate a genuine concern for employee welfare through concrete actions rather than mere policy statements," he said.

Continuous heavy rain warning for Sabah, Sarawak

KUALA LUMPUR: Continuous heavy rain at the severe level is expected to occur in Sandakan and its surrounding areas in Sabah today, according to the Malaysian Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia).

MetMalaysia also issued a "yellow" warning for continuous rainfall in several areas of Sarawak, including Kuching, Serian, Samarahan, Sri Aman, Betong, Sarikei, Sibul, and Mukah.

In Sabah, a "yellow" warning for continuous rainfall also affects the West Coast Division (Ranau and Kota Belud), Kinabatangan, and Kudat.

The public can obtain the latest weather updates through MetMalaysia's official website, the myCuaca mobile app, and the department's official social media channels.

They can also contact the MetMalaysia hotline at 1-300-22-1638 for further inquiries.

Meanwhile, the number of flood evacuees in Sarawak has decreased to 9,039 people placed in 40 temporary relief centres across six divisions as of yesterday morning, compared with 9,314 on Monday night.

The Sarawak Disaster Management Committee Secretariat reported that from the total, 4,492 evacuees are sheltering in nine centres in Bintulu, down from 4,727, while 1,525 remain in four centres in Serian.

Miri recorded 1,406 evacuees, down from 1,464 in 12 centres, while Sibul saw 828, down from 839 in five centres.

In Samarahan, the number of evacuees remains at 523 sheltering in four centres, while in Mukah, the number of evacuees slightly increased to 265 in three centres, compared with 236 people.

The number of evacuees in Sabah has slightly increased to 102 from 27 families yesterday morning. — Bernama

Kedah marks Feb 11 as occasional holiday

ALOR SETAR: The Kedah state government has announced Feb 11 as an occasional holiday in conjunction with the Thaipusam celebration.

Kedah deputy state secretary (Management) Datuk Dr Nadzaman Mustaffa, in his official letter to state and federal heads of departments, said on Monday that the occasional holiday is in line with the provisions under Section 9(1) of the Holidays Act 1951 (Act 369).

On Jan 22, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor said the holiday was approved to enable devotees to celebrate Thaipusam.

It is understood that the approval was made following discussions in the recent state executive council meeting. — Bernama

Enhanced medical, emergency response services for Thaipusam

KUALA LUMPUR: This year's Thaipusam celebration at Batu Caves will feature enhanced medical and emergency response services, as 1.5 million devotees and visitors are expected to gather at the temple cave site on Feb 11.

To manage the large influx of devotees, a central control command communication and coordination unit has been established under the directive of Sri Maha Mariamman Temple Devasthanam (SMMTD) chairman Tan Sri R. Nadaraja ensuring a streamlined emergency response system.

SMMTD medical and emergency coordinator for Thaipusam 2025 Datuk Dr A.T. Kumararajah said the initiative is to ensure efficient management of the large influx of participants.

"The Selayang emergency and trauma team will be mobilised to provide continuous medical support throughout the festival. Given that Batu Caves is the focal point of the celebrations, the

team has been preparing to handle potential medical emergencies," he said in a statement.

He added that medical commander for Thaipusam 2025 and an emergency medical specialist at Hospital Selayang Dr Nabil Muhammad has been leading this initiative for over a decade, with the involvement of eight hospitals under the Health Ministry alongside nine government agencies, uniformed bodies and volunteer organisations.

Among the participating agencies are the ministry, Malaysian Red Crescent Society, Federal Territory St John Ambulance, Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM), Persatuan Kecemasan Sukarelawan Malaysia, Pertubuhan Sukarelawan Ambulans India Malaysia, Fire and Rescue Department and National Blood Centre.

A total of 1,500 personnel will be deployed to provide a secure environment for all attendees.

Meanwhile, Nabil said emergency response

zones have been introduced this year at Batu Caves to improve accessibility and response time during critical situations.

He said the coverage extends beyond the 5.6ha Batu Caves grounds to the riverside where *kavadi* bearers begin their journey, and the temple's interior.

"The layout ensures that emergency teams can navigate dense crowds efficiently, thus reducing response times and providing immediate assistance."

"The other hotspot is the 272 steps leading to the main cave temple, as well as the 14km route taken by the silver chariot from Sri Maha Mariamman Temple in Jalan Tun H.S. Lee to Batu Caves," he said.

Batu Caves and surrounding areas have been divided into 24 medical zones, including specific hotspots such as the Dark Cave, KTM station, riverside, and flyover in front of the temple's

main entrance. The zones are numbered and divided into categories A and B, such as 5A and 12B.

SMMTD trustee Datuk N. Sivakumar said the silver chariot procession, bearing the statue of Lord Murugan, will depart from Sri Maha Mariamman Temple in Jalan Tun H.S. Lee at 9pm on Feb 9, covering a 15km journey to Batu Caves.

He said preparations include collaborations with the police, Selayang Municipal Council, and local authorities.

"At least 100,000 devotees are expected to accompany the chariot."

"The Devasthanam (SMMTD) will deploy 1,500 volunteers over the three-day festival, while enforcement agencies, including Kuala Lumpur City Hall, will help monitor crowd movements and prevent overcrowding," he said. — Bernama

Dark and bright side of sugar baby lifestyle

➤ Arrangement offers lucrative monthly payments, paid travel and expensive gifts but challenges include demands for sex, forced attachment and financial dependence

■ BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM
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PETALING JAYA: Some Malaysian women working as "sugar babies" earn up to RM12,000 per month and enjoy luxury vacations, designer goods and financial stability through relationships with wealthy older men.

theSun published a report by Seasia.stats recently, which stated a recent study by dating site "Seeking Arrangement" revealed that Malaysia ranks third in Asia for the highest number of sugar daddies, with an estimated 32,500 individuals involved in such arrangements.

Since then, *theSun* has spoken to two sugar babies on their experiences.

Jeselyn (not her real name), 27, from Johor Bahru, became a sugar baby to live a lavish lifestyle.

She said earning RM12,000 monthly from a wealthy businessman gave her financial security while allowing her to travel, buy branded goods and invest.

However, she added that such arrangements are not always straightforward.

"Some sugar daddies want more than just a financial transaction and may ask for sex. The emotional expectations can be challenging."

Another sugar baby, Maya (not her real name), 25, a media communications student

from Selangor, turned to sugar dating to support her single mother and pay tuition fees. Initially hesitant, she reconsidered after seeing a friend earn money just by having dinner with wealthy men.

She said her first arrangement was with a 54-year-old businessman who paid her RM8,000 monthly for companionship.

"Another man took me on a weekend trip to Dubai while a third gave me an iPhone and designer handbags just for my time. Some men indeed expect more than what was agreed upon, and once you rely on them financially, they hold all the power."

"I know some girls who were pressured into sleeping with the men just because they couldn't say no. People think sugar babies are just paid for sex, but that's not entirely true. If men just wanted sex, they'd go to a prostitute with no strings attached."

She said sugar daddies seek companionship and someone to talk to, spend time with and feel young again, adding that traditional dating apps often involve similar dynamics.

"On some dating apps, guys take you to dinner, have sex and then disappear. With sugar daddies, the expectations are clearer. Men actually want to pamper you, so you have to ask yourself what you are worth. It's not just about money, it's about how you want to be treated."

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Anthropology and Sociology senior lecturer Dr Velan Kunjuran said the rise in such relationships is driven by economic pressures, materialism and the erosion of traditional values.

"The rise in cost of living, particularly in urban areas, has made financial dependence a reality for many young people, especially university students and early-career professionals. The economic vulnerability creates a supply-demand cycle in which wealthier, older men offer financial incentives in exchange for companionship."

He warned of long-term societal impacts such as the weakening of family values and shifting dating norms.

"Sugar relationships redefine masculinity and power. Older men use financial means to assert dominance, while younger women are often unfairly judged."

He said with urban centres like Kuala Lumpur fostering such relationships due to wealth disparities and liberal social attitudes, education on financial independence and ethical relationships is crucial to counter such trends.

"If left unchecked, we may see an evolving cycle in which today's sugar babies become tomorrow's sugar daddies or sugar mommies."

Velan recommended stronger financial literacy programmes, ethics education and open conversations about the impacts of transactional relationships on society.

"Financial independence and awareness of ethics are key to preventing vulnerable individuals from being drawn into these arrangements."

Muhyiddin maintains not guilty plea

KUALA LUMPUR: Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin maintained his not guilty plea at the High Court yesterday to a charge of uttering seditious remarks during a campaign for the Nenggiri by-election in Kelantan last year.

The 77-year-old former prime minister entered the plea after the charge was read to him before Judge Datuk Muhammad Jamil Hussin.

The case was initially mentioned at the Gua Musang Sessions Court in Kota Bharu on Aug 27 last year and was later transferred to the Kuala Lumpur High Court following a defence application.

The Perikatan Nasional chairman is charged with making the seditious remarks in an open area near Dewan Semai Bakti Felda Perasu on Aug 14, 2024 between 10.30pm and 11.50pm.

The alleged seditious remarks concerned his claim that he was not invited by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to be sworn in as prime minister following the 15th General Election despite allegedly having the support of 115 out of 222 MPs at that time.

He is charged under Section 4(1)(b) of the Sedition Act 1948, which is punishable under Subsection 4(1) of the same Act, with a maximum fine of RM5,000 or a maximum imprisonment of three years, or both, if convicted.

The prosecution was undertaken by DPP Azlina Rasdi while counsel Amer Hamzah Arshad represented Muhyiddin.

Earlier, Amer Hamzah informed the court that an application would be made to refer a legal question to the Federal Court under Section 84 of the Judiciary Act 1964 concerning the sedition charge his client is facing.

The court then set March 6 for case mention and submission of documents and maintained the RM5,000 bail set by the Gua Musang Sessions Court previously. - Bernama

Human bones found in oil palm plantation

SEREMBAN: Skeletal remains were discovered by a worker at an oil palm plantation in Siliu, Lukut.

Port Dickson deputy police chief DSP Muhamad Mustafah Hussin said the Lukut police station received a call regarding the grim discovery at around 10am on Monday.

"The discovery was made by a (plantation worker) who wanted to repair a leaking pipe in the vicinity and found a skull and several bones not far away," he said in a statement.

Muhamad Mustafah added that police combed the area but did not find any personal documents, clothing, weapons or identification that could provide clues to the identity of the deceased and there were no criminal elements detected.

He said the case has been classified as sudden death.

Muhamad Mustafah also advised the public not to make or spread statements that could cause public anxiety, and such acts could be subject to action under the Communications and Multimedia Act. - Bernama



NEW ASSET ...

Penang Fire and Rescue Department director Mohamad Shoki Hamzah (second from right) and Jalan Perak fire station chief A'azelan Hassan during a ceremony yesterday to take delivery of a new Compact Fire Rescue Tender vehicle in Bukit Kawan, Penang. - BERNAMAPIC

Ruling on vocational college murder case set for Feb 28

TAWAU: The decision on whether 13 male students of the Lahad Datu Vocational College will be called to defend themselves or acquitted of the murder charge of their fellow student Mohamad Nazmie Azzat Mohd Narul Azwan last year will be known on Feb 28.

High Court Judge Datuk Duncan Sikodol set the date during an online status review proceeding yesterday

with DPP Nur Nisla Abdul Latif and lawyers representing the accused.

The defence team includes Datuk Ram Singh, Kamarudin Mohamad Chinki and Chen Wen Jye, who are representing eight of the 13 youths, while the remaining five are represented by Mohamed Zairi Zainal Abidin, Abdul Ghani Zelika, Vivian Thien, Jhesseny P. Kang and Kusni Ambotuwu.

During the session, Nur Nisla, Kamarudin, Chen, Abdul Ghani, Vivian, Jhesseny and Kusni were present in court, participating via video call, while the rest joined from Kota Kinabalu.

If the court rules in favour of the prosecution and finds that a *prima facie* case exists, the 13 accused will be called to enter their defence. Otherwise, they will be acquitted.

The prosecution trial, which took place last year, lasted 12 days starting from Nov 19, during which 25 witnesses were called to testify.

The 13 students, aged 16 to 19, were charged with the murder of Mohamad Nazmie Azzat, 17, at dormitory rooms 7 Resak and 5 Belian of Lahad Datu Vocational College between 9pm on March 21 and 7.38am on March 22 last year.

They were charged under Section 302 of the Penal Code, read together with Section 34 of the same law, which carries the death penalty or a prison term of 30 years to 40 years and up to 12 strokes of the cane, upon conviction.

The prosecution is led by Nur Nisla, assisted by DPPs Ng Juhn Tao and Batrisyia Mohd Khusri. - Bernama



Couple **takes on role** of parents to 150 cats

➤ Construction of shelter financed personally but monthly expenses subsidised by private donors

IPOH: The daily routine of housewife Ramlah Darus and her husband Salim Dahri begins at 7am when they set out to feed the street cats they have rescued, even before breakfast.

First, they head to the back portion of their house in Taman Perpaduan Koperasi, where they are greeted by the hungry cries of dozens of kittens. After feeding them and cleaning their litter boxes, Ramlah, 62, rides her scooter to the market to buy essentials. While marketing, she keeps an eye out for stray cats. If she finds any, she collects them and places them in a carrier she always has with her.

Meanwhile, Salim, 61, a retired policeman, heads to a shelter near their home, which houses over 150 cats rescued from the market or found on the streets. He feeds them and cleans the shelter.

"Sometimes, I travel outside Ipoh if someone contacts me about an abandoned cat. I could choose to rest at home at my age, but I can't bear to see these cats neglected," Ramlah said.

Given the couple's devotion to cats, it is hard to believe they once disliked them intensely.

"We considered them dirty. Furthermore, I suffer from asthma," she said, adding that everything changed after their second child, Fitri, 30, brought home a black cat he named Tam and insisted on keeping it.

When her son left home for further studies, she had no choice but to take care of the cat. Over time, she grew fond of it.

"I then secretly started rescuing stray cats and bringing them home. My husband initially disapproved but eventually warmed to the idea," said Ramlah, who began her cat rescue mission about eight years ago.

The mother of six said as the number of cats



Ramlah said she and her husband initially disliked felines but had a change of heart after their son brought home their first cat. — **BERNAMAPIC**

grew, caring for them became more challenging. This prompted her and her husband to search for a dedicated space to house the felines, Bernama reported.

"Thank God, someone was kind enough to donate a plot of land nearby for us to build a cat shelter. We funded the construction ourselves," she said, adding that expenses for the cats have increased to around RM1,000 a month.

"My husband is willing to use his pension to ensure the welfare of these animals, which we see as a charitable act. Thankfully, we also have regular donors who contribute either food or money every month, which greatly helps us continue our mission," she said.

Ramlah also said she and Salim established an NGO called Persatuan Prihatin Kucing Jalanan Ipoh last year with like-minded friends and family members who share their passion.

"My husband and I cannot afford to take care of the cats on our own. These animals are also creatures of Allah, that need care and

protection. Every time I share posts about our activities on social media, some kind-hearted people step forward to contribute," she said.

The couple's kindness towards strays has not been without criticism, with some questioning why they care for so many cats despite their own financial struggles.

"That's the challenge. Not everyone agrees with what we're doing. Some neighbours look at us disapprovingly, and there are those who say if we can't afford it, we shouldn't be keeping the cats.

"But we are determined to continue as long as we are able," Ramlah said, adding that the rising cost of living has also led to an increase in the food and medical expenses.

Individuals wishing to donate may send contributions to Maybank account numbers 5582-8437-7416 or 7887-8892-7257-1091, under the name Persatuan Prihatin Kucing Jalanan Ipoh, Perak, or contact Ramlah at 011-3976-4493.

Duo on 10,000km trek of faith to Mecca

KEPALA BATAS: In a display of determination and faith, two friends have set out on a 10,000km journey on foot, travelling from Bertam in Penang to Mecca in Saudi Arabia to fulfil their dream of performing the *umrah*.

Muhammad Farhan Khadid, 34, from Pendang and Shamsul Azrin Man, 43, from Kota Sarang Semut in Kedah, began their journey on Monday.

Self-employed Muhammad Farhan said they chose to begin their journey at Masjid Abdullah Fahim in Kepala Batas, where he works.

The pair began preparing physically and mentally last December when they accompanied another duo Mohamad Al Bukhari Ellia, 26, and Mohamad Azizul Abdullah, 34, on a trek to Mecca.

"We walked with them from Alor Setar to Hatyai, Thailand in December. That was when we decided to follow their footsteps. Since then, we have been preparing for this journey," Farhan said.

"Alhamdulillah, today we begin our journey with the support of Al Bukhari and Azizul and with prayers from everyone for our safe travel."

Farhan, who is single, revealed that they were not sponsored for the trip. Instead, they funded the entire journey through their savings of approximately RM10,000.

"We performed *Istikhara* prayers before deciding to go on this journey. We have also stayed committed to our training, including jogging and running, and sought advice from experienced travellers who have walked or cycled to Mecca," he added.

Shamsul Azrin, a businessman and father to a seven-year-old, said they do not have a set timeline but plan to walk 25km to 30km daily.

"We will follow the same route taken by Al Bukhari and Azizul, starting with a walk to Hatyai. From there, we'll take a train to Bangkok, then fly to New Delhi in India.

"Then we'll walk to Lahore and Karachi in Pakistan, head to Bandar Abbas in Iran, take a ferry to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, and eventually make our way to Riyadh and Madinah in Saudi Arabia," he said.

Muhammad Farhan and Shamsul Azrin are hopeful that Malaysians will pray for their safety and success. — Bernama

EDUCATION

FOCUS 2025

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



Sri Lanka president vows to transform national image

➤ Celebrations scaled down to reduce government spending

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's leftist president marked the anniversary of independence from Britain yesterday with a pledge to change the impoverished island nation's image as a "corrupt" country.

Self-avowed Marxist Anura Kumara Dissanayake dispensed with the usual elaborate military pageantry of jet flyovers and horse parades to mark the 1948 handover of power.

His government instead staged a scaled-down military march in keeping with his pledge to pare lavish spending on government officialdom.

"We are committed to transforming Sri Lanka's global image from a country known for corrupt governance," he said in a message to the nation.

"Despite countless obstacles and the deep-rooted flaws of the past corrupt political system, the people's government, built by the collective will of the citizens, is steadily progressing forward."

His government concluded a long-delayed debt restructuring with both bilateral and private creditors late last year, ending Sri Lanka's status as a bankrupt nation.

Sri Lanka had defaulted on its



Dissanayake prepares to hoist the national flag at Independence Square in Colombo yesterday. – AFP/PPIC

US\$46 billion (RM205 billion) external debt in April 2022 after running out of foreign exchange to finance the import of food, fuel, medicines and other essentials.

The unprecedented economic meltdown forced then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down.

His successor, Ranil Wickremesinghe, secured a US\$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

Dissanayake, who defeated Wickremesinghe in elections last September, is maintaining the tough austerity measures introduced

under his predecessor and has vowed to continue the four-year IMF bailout programme.

"As the new government, over the past four months, we have laid the foundation for a stable economy and introduced a new political culture," Dissanayake said. – AFP

Indonesia repatriates Frenchman on death row

JAKARTA: A Frenchman on death row in Indonesia since 2007 for drug offences left prison yesterday ahead of his transfer to France.

Indonesia, which has some of the world's toughest drug laws, has in recent weeks released half a dozen high-profile detainees, including a Filipina mother on death row and the last five members of the so-called "Bali Nine" drug ring.

Serge Atlaoui, 61, was driven from Salemba prison in Jakarta to the city's main airport where he will be handed over to French police officers before boarding a commercial flight to Paris. In France, he will be presented to

prosecutors "and most likely detained while awaiting a decision on the adaptation (of his sentence)", his lawyer Richard Sedillot said.

Jakarta has left it to the French government to grant Atlaoui clemency, amnesty or a reduced sentence.

"Serge is happy and calm," said Sedillot, "but he is going to need a little time to reorganise himself."

His return was made possible after an agreement between the French Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin and his Indonesian counterpart Yusril Isha Mahendra on Jan 24.

In the agreement, Jakarta said

they had decided not to execute Atlaoui and authorised his return on humanitarian grounds because he was ill.

Atlaoui has been receiving weekly medical treatment at a hospital.

He was arrested in 2005 at a factory in a Jakarta suburb where drugs were discovered, and accused of being a "chemist".

A welder from Metz in northeastern France, the father of four has always denied being a drug trafficker, saying that he was installing machinery in what he thought was an acrylic factory.

"I thought there was something

suspicious (about the factory)," Atlaoui said in 2015.

Initially sentenced to life in prison, his sentence was reviewed by the supreme court and changed to death on appeal.

He was due to be executed alongside eight others in 2015, but was granted a reprieve after Paris applied pressure and the Indonesian authorities allowed an outstanding appeal to proceed.

There are at least 530 inmates on death row in Indonesia, according to the human rights organisation Kontas, referencing official figures. – AFP

Myanmar rebel group admits killing two prisoners

YANGON: A Myanmar rebel group said its members killed two prisoners in a rare admission of deadly violence as it fights to maintain control of the country's western borderlands.

The incident occurred in February last year during an Arakan Army (AA) offensive on Kyauktaw township in Rakhine state, according to the group's spokesman Khaing Thu Kha.

"Our local militias were unable to control their anger and committed crimes.

"They retaliated against the actions of the soldiers who had

arrested, tortured and killed family members," he said.

A two-minute video clip showed seven men – some wearing AA uniforms and holding firearms – kicking and beating two shirtless men on the ground.

In another video, the alleged killers were seen cutting the captives' throats with machete-like knives.

Khaing Thu Kha admitted that the videos were authentic and the perpetrators were members of the AA group.

Rakhine state in Myanmar's west

is riven with ethnic and religious divisions.

It came under the global spotlight after a bloody 2017 army crackdown that forced some 740,000 Rohingyas over the border into Bangladesh.

The military took control of the country in a 2021 coup against Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government.

The AA says it is fighting for more autonomy for the ethnic Rakhine people, a population that is also accused of aiding the military in their expulsion of the Rohingyas.

The group claimed complete

control of a key region along the Bangladesh border in December, piling further pressure on the government battling opponents elsewhere.

The human rights organisation Fortify Rights has called on the International Criminal Court to investigate war crimes committed by the AA.

Khaing Thu Kha said the AA had identified and punished all those involved in the incident. He said the group did not accept unlawful killings. – AFP

Philippines, US hold joint air patrols

MANILA: The air forces of the Philippines and the United States were holding joint patrols over the South China Sea yesterday, a spokesperson for the Philippine Air Force said, as Manila said it was monitoring three Chinese vessels in its maritime zones.

The one-day exercise was being carried out in the West Philippine Sea, Philippine air force spokesperson Maria Consuelo Castillo said, using Manila's term for waters in the South China Sea that fall within its exclusive economic zone.

Castillo said the two Philippine FA-50 fighter aircraft and two US B-1B bombers were taking part in the exercises, which included flying over Scarborough Shoal, a disputed maritime feature in the South China Sea which China controls.

"This is not in relation to any particular issue. This is just part of the usual training we have," Castillo told a media briefing.

Security engagements between the two treaty allies have ramped up under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, against a backdrop of rising tensions between Manila and Beijing due to their overlapping claims in the South China Sea.

At the briefing, the Philippine navy said it was "closely monitoring" three Chinese navy vessels within Manila's maritime zones, including a *Jiangkai* class guided missile frigate.

"The presence of PLA-N (People's Liberation Army-Navy) reflects the People's Republic of China's complete disregard for international law and undermines the peace and stability in the region," navy spokesperson John Percie Alcos said.

Xinhua news agency reported on Monday the passage of the Chinese fleet was consistent with international law, quoting a spokesperson from the PLA's Southern Theatre Command. – Reuters

56 arrested at Jakarta 'sex party'

JAKARTA: Police arrested 56 men at a "sex party" here, three of whom could face up to 15 years in jail on charges of breaching pornography laws.

"The men were arrested on Saturday at a South Jakarta hotel," said police spokesperson Ade Ary Syam Indradi late on Monday. Three of those arrested were named as criminal suspects for organising the event.

Homosexuality is not illegal in most of Indonesia, including the capital, but it is generally considered a taboo subject.

"The event was ... merely based on pleasure that they wanted to seek," Indradi said, adding authorities found condoms and HIV medications at the party.

The three named suspects were accused of facilitating "pornography" services, which carries a maximum jail term of 15 years, Indradi said.

Activists have said the anti-pornography laws are often misused. Hundreds were arrested in police raids of a club, a hotel, and a spa in 2017.

A survey by the think-tank Pew Research Centre in 2020 showed that 80% of Indonesians believe homosexuality "should not be accepted by society". – Reuters



Musk takes over Treasury payments, sparks lawsuit

➤ DOGE accused of illegal access to private data

WASHINGTON: Elon Musk and his aides have taken control of the US Treasury Department's payments system, triggering a lawsuit charging he is illegally getting access to private data of millions of Americans.

Musk is leading President Donald Trump's federal cost-cutting efforts under a new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

The suit calls on a federal judge to declare it illegal for Musk or others from DOGE to get personal information about taxpayers and to block the Treasury Department from letting that happen.

"People who must share information with the federal government should not be forced to share information with Elon Musk or his DOGE," read a lawsuit filed in Washington by trade unions and an advocacy group.

"And federal law says they do not have to,"

The Treasury's closely guarded payments system handles the money flow of the government, including US\$6 trillion (RM27 trillion) annually for Social Security, Medicare, federal salaries and other critical payments.

Musk's control of the payments system was approved by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and was made possible when a career official was put on administrative leave on Friday after refusing to hand over access.

The official subsequently retired from the department, a source close to the matter said. Bessent's granting access of personal Treasury information to DOGE-affiliated individuals means "individuals from all walks of life have no assurance that their information will receive the protection that federal law affords," the lawsuit argued.

Wired magazine reported that Musk has placed young surrogates into key government positions, with his team gaining access to the payment systems typically restricted to career employees.

The staff members, reportedly aged between 19 and 24, were also placed at the

federal Office of Personnel Management, the human resources department for federal workers.

Last week, the office sent an email offering most employees the option to leave government service immediately with nine months' severance pay, though many legal experts warned staff to be wary of the offer.

Democratic lawmakers are expressing deep concerns about political operators having access to the government's money flow, saying it amounts to an illegal power grab.

"They are seizing the tools you need for a coup," said Senator Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee.

Elizabeth Warren, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Banking Committee, blasted the move as "extraordinarily dangerous" and said it posed a systemic risk to the economy.

"You appear to have handed over a highly sensitive system responsible for millions of Americans' private data, and a key function of government, to an unelected billionaire and his unqualified flunkies," Warren wrote in a letter to Bessent. — AFP

Rubio hails Panama exit plan decision

SAN SALVADOR: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday welcomed Panama's decision to let its participation in China's global infrastructure plan expire, calling the move "a great step forward".

Any move by Panama to distance itself from Chinese President Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative is a win for Washington, which has argued that Beijing uses the scheme for "debt trap diplomacy" to cement its global influence.

Rubio this week made his first overseas trip as the top US diplomat under President Donald Trump to Panama and pressured the country over its ties with China.

After talks with Rubio, Panama's President Jose Raul Mulino said his country's broad agreement to contribute to the Chinese initiative will not be renewed, and could be terminated early. He said the deal was set to expire in two to three years, but did not elaborate.

"Yesterday's announcement by President @JoseRaulMulino that Panama will allow its participation in the CCP's Belt and Road Initiative to expire is a great step forward for US-Panama relations, a free Panama Canal, and another example of @POTUS leadership to protect our national security and deliver prosperity for the American people," Rubio posted on X.

Panama was the first Latin American country to officially endorse the Belt and Road Initiative in November 2017, five months after switching diplomatic ties to China from Taiwan.

China rejects Western criticism of the plan, saying well over 100 countries have joined it, and that it has boosted global development with new ports, bridges, railways and other projects.

Panama had made a "regrettable decision", China's UN Ambassador Fu Cong said.

"The smear campaign by the US and some other countries on the Belt and Road Initiative is totally groundless," Fu said in New York. — Reuters

Yoon in court again for impeachment trial

SEOUL: South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, who has been arrested and suspended from duties over his declaration of martial law, was in court again yesterday for hearings that will decide whether to officially remove him from office.

Yoon, a former prosecutor, plunged South Korea into political turmoil when he declared martial law on Dec 3, suspending civilian rule and sending soldiers to parliament.

His attempt to impose martial law only lasted around six hours as the opposition-led parliament defied armed troops to vote it down and later impeached him over the move.

As part of a separate criminal investigation, Yoon was detained in a dawn raid in mid-January on insurrection charges, becoming the first sitting South Korean head of state to be arrested.

He is being held in detention but has been attending impeachment hearings at the Constitutional Court, which will determine whether his impeachment is upheld.

If the court upholds the impeachment, an election must be held within 60 days to elect a new president.

A convoy of black SUVs arrived at the court yesterday, carrying Yoon to attend a hearing.

At previous hearings, Yoon denied instructing top military commanders to "drag out" lawmakers from parliament to prevent them from voting down his decree, a claim refuted by opposition MPs.

He has argued that he did not believe the short-lived martial law was a "failed martial law", but rather one that "ended a bit sooner" than he expected.

Yoon, 64, was indicted in January, with prosecutors accusing him of being a "ringleader of the insurrection".

He faces a separate criminal trial on those charges. — AFP



GRIM RETRIEVAL ... A crane lifts a piece of American Airlines flight 5342 from the Potomac River on Monday in Arlington, Virginia. The flight from Wichita, Kansas collided midair with a helicopter on Jan 29. There were no survivors among the 67 people onboard both aircraft. — AFP/IC

Court upholds sentence on ex-Nissan exec Kelly

TOKYO: A court here yesterday upheld a suspended six-month sentence for former Nissan executive Greg Kelly, a one-time aide of the firm's fugitive ex-CEO Carlos Ghosn.

Both prosecutors and Kelly, a 68-year-old American charged with helping Ghosn attempt to conceal income, had questioned the 2022 verdict, but the Tokyo High Court dismissed their appeals.

Kelly was arrested in 2018 in Japan at the same time as Ghosn, whose detention sent shockwaves around the business world.

Ghosn, a French, Lebanese and Brazilian national, fled the country concealed in a music equipment box the following year while on bail leaving Kelly alone to face charges.

After the first verdict nearly three years ago,

Kelly returned to the United States and has not attended the higher court hearings, his lawyer Yoichi Kitamura said.

But the Kelly saga is not over yet.

"We will appeal" to the Supreme Court, Kitamura told reporters yesterday.

"It's not clear why our appeal was turned down," he said.

The prosecutors office declined to comment on whether they will appeal.

Kelly learned the verdict by phone at his home in the United States, said another lawyer, Tatsuo Ninoseki.

There was no immediate comment available from Kelly.

Prosecutors had originally sought two years in prison for Kelly, accusing him of helping

Ghosn underreport his income to the tune of ¥9.1 billion (RM267 million).

In 2022, Kelly was found not guilty on the charges for the financial years 2010 to 2016, and guilty for the financial year 2017, with the court handing down a prison sentence suspended for three years.

Ghosn's audacious escape to Lebanon, where he remains at large, left prosecutors red-faced. The former auto tycoon says he fled Japan for fear he would not receive a fair trial.

Separately, French investigators have issued an international arrest warrant against Ghosn over allegations including abuse of company funds and money laundering, in connection with contracts issued by a Renault-Nissan subsidiary. — AFP



Palestinians waiting to buy bread in Gaza City on Monday. — REUTERSPIC

WASHINGTON: Five Arab foreign ministers and a senior Palestinian official sent a joint letter to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio opposing plans to displace Palestinians from Gaza, as suggested by President Donald Trump in late January.

The letter was sent on Monday and signed by the foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE, as well as Palestinian presidential adviser Hussein al-Sheikh. It was reported first by Axios, which said the top diplomats met in Cairo over the weekend.

Trump first floated the suggestion of Jordan and Egypt taking in Palestinians from Gaza on Jan 25. When asked if he was suggesting that as a long-term or short-term solution, the president said: "Could be either."

Trump's comments echoed long-standing Palestinian fears of being permanently driven from their homes and were labelled as a proposal of ethnic cleansing by critics. Jordan, Egypt and other Arab nations opposed the proposal.

"Reconstruction in Gaza should be through direct engagement with and participation of the people of Gaza. Palestinians will live in their land and help rebuild it.

Arab nations oppose relocating Palestinians

► Israel, Hamas set for next phase of ceasefire

"And they should not be stripped of their agency during reconstruction as they must take ownership of the process with the support of the international community," the letter said.

Israel and Hamas said they are ready for negotiations on a new phase in their fragile Gaza ceasefire.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Israel would send a delegation to the Qatari capital Doha later this week for negotiations.

"Israel is preparing for the working-level delegation to leave for Doha at the end of this week to discuss technical details related to the continued implementation of the agreement," the office said in a

statement following meetings in Washington between Netanyahu and Trump's advisers, including Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff.

Hamas has said it is ready to negotiate the second stage of the ceasefire, mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States.

The next phase aims to secure the release of remaining hostages and lay out steps towards ending the war, which has devastated the Palestinian territory of 2.4 million people.

Before leaving for Washington, Netanyahu said Israel's wars with Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and its confrontations with Iran had "redrawn the map" in the Middle East.

"But I believe that working

closely with Trump we can redraw it even further, and for the better," he said.

Witkoff, who met Netanyahu on Monday over terms for the second phase of the truce, said he was "certainly hopeful" the truce would stick.

Under the Gaza ceasefire's 42-day first phase, Hamas is to free 33 hostages in staggered releases in exchange for around 1,900 Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

Four hostage-prisoner exchanges have already taken place, and Hamas has freed 18 hostages so far in exchange of some 600 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

The truce has also led to a surge of food, fuel, medical and other aid into rubble-strewn Gaza, as well as allowing displaced Gazans to return to the territory's north. — Reuters/AFP

Japan mulls taking in sick and wounded Gaza residents

TOKYO: The Japanese government is considering offering medical care in the world's fourth-largest economy for sick and wounded residents of Gaza, Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said.

Ishiba told a parliament session on Monday that his administration is working on a policy to provide support in Japan for "those who are ill or injured in Gaza".

He said that educational opportunities could also be offered to people from Gaza, which is under

a fragile ceasefire with Israel.

Ishiba was responding to a lawmaker who had asked whether a 2017 scheme to accept Syrian refugees as students could be used as a reference point to help Gaza residents.

"We are thinking about launching a similar programme for Gaza, and the government will make efforts towards the realisation of this plan," Ishiba said.

The measures discussed in parliament are different to Japan's

main asylum policy, which has long been criticised for the low number of claims granted by the nation.

In 2023, Japan accepted 1,310 people seeking asylum – less than 10% of the 13,823 applicants.

Under a different framework, as of the end of last year, Japan had accepted 82 people as students from Syria who were recognised as refugees by the UN refugee agency, a Foreign Ministry official in charge of aid programmes said.

That scheme was aimed at

educating future leaders of Syria as part of Japan's long-term foreign aid policy, the official said.

The Health Ministry in Gaza said 50 Palestinian patients, including 30 children with cancer, and their companions went through the reopened Rafah crossing to Egypt on Saturday as part of the ceasefire deal, which came into effect on Jan 19.

The director of Gaza hospitals said 6,000 patients were ready to be transferred from the Palestinian territory. — AFP

Putin revives 'Intervision' music contest

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin on Monday signed a decree on holding an international music contest called "Intervision" in Russia this year, after the country was banned from the Eurovision Song Contest.

A contest of this name was held among countries allied with the USSR in the Soviet era. Russia has since made several attempts to revive the format.

The European Broadcasting Union, the organiser of Eurovision, banned Russia after its February 2022 offensive in Ukraine, meaning it cannot enter or broadcast the contest.

The Kremlin decree sets out a plan to hold the alternative contest, called *Intervision* in Russian, or Intervision, in Moscow and the surrounding region, with the aim of "developing international cultural and humanitarian cooperation".

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko was named as the head of the organising committee.

Presidential envoy Mikhail Shvydkoi said the contest would be held in September, adding that "almost 20 countries" were ready to take part, including all the members of the BRICS and CIS blocs.

BRICS members include Brazil, India and China, while the CIS is made up of the ex-Soviet countries still allied with Russia.

The Intervision song contest was held in the 1960s and 1970s, principally involving countries from the eastern bloc, including Poland and Czechoslovakia. — AFP

BRIEFS

FREE RUSSIAN HOSTAGE: ENVOY

MOSCOW: A senior diplomat urged a top Hamas official on Monday to keep to its commitment to release a Russian hostage. Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov raised the issue in talks with Musa Abu Marzuk, a member of Hamas' Politburo, Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "It was again stressed from the Russian side that it was vital to fulfil the promise expressed by the Hamas leadership concerning the release of Russian citizen A. Trufanov and others being held hostage in the Gaza Strip," it said. — Reuters

OIL TANKER CROSSES RED SEA SAFELY

CAIRO: Liberian-flagged crude oil tanker *Chrysalis*, which was attacked by Yemen's Houthis last year, sailed through the Red Sea this week, the Suez Canal Authority said on Monday, in one of the first voyages since the militia announced a halt in attacks on ships not linked to Israel. Shipping companies, many of which have suspended Red Sea voyages and rerouted vessels around southern Africa to avoid potential Houthi attacks, have been anxiously waiting for confirmation of safe voyages through the Red Sea since the Gaza ceasefire. — Reuters



COMMENT by Ts Elman Mustafa El Bakri

Empowering Gen Z to innovate industries

AS businesses gear up for another year of challenges and opportunities in 2025, one question lingers: How can traditional industries stay competitive in a rapidly evolving world?

The answer, surprisingly, may not lie in boardrooms or executive suites but in the untapped ideas of younger employees working on the front lines.

For industries long defined by rigid hierarchies and top-down decision-making, the time has come to embrace a new model of innovation – one that flows from the bottom up.

The younger generation, particularly Gen Z, entering the workforce is digitally savvy, collaborative and bring a fresh perspective to problem-solving. Yet, in many traditional industries, their potential often goes unnoticed or undervalued.

These industries, steeped in decades-old practices, sometimes struggle to adapt to today's fast-paced digital landscape. What they need is not just a technological overhaul but also a cultural one – a shift toward openness and inclusivity, where innovation can sprout from any level of the organisation.

Bottom-up innovation

Traditional industries often operate on the assumption that good ideas must come from the top. Senior leaders set the strategy and everyone else falls in line. While this structure ensures clarity and control, it also stifles creativity and risks alienating younger employees, who are accustomed to more participatory environments.

This top-down approach particularly limits opportunities for lower-level employees to contribute ideas or innovate. This will make employees feel their input is neither welcomed nor valued.

Research published in *Harvard Business Review* in 2019 indicates that environments promoting collaboration and participation are more conducive to innovation, contrasting sharply with the hierarchical nature of top-down structure.

Bottom-up innovation, by contrast,

flips this script. It is about recognising that employees closest to the action, whether they are factory floor workers, customer service representatives or junior engineers, often have the best insights into inefficiencies and opportunities for improvement.

According to an article published by LinkedIn in 2024, employees at various levels can identify unique challenges and opportunities based on their direct experiences with products, services or processes. This grassroots perspective can lead to innovative solutions that may be overlooked in a top-down approach.

These employees, particularly Gen Z, are digital natives too. They can naturally identify ways to integrate technology into workflows and improve processes. Ignoring their input will not only be a missed opportunity but also a liability in today's hyper-competitive market.

One of the biggest enablers of bottom-up innovation is technology. Digital platforms like Slack, Microsoft Teams and Trello make it easier than ever for employees to share ideas, collaborate on solutions and provide feedback.

In traditional industries, these tools can bridge the gap between management and front line workers, creating a more inclusive and dynamic flow of communication.

For example, take a manufacturing company that introduces a digital suggestion box via an app. Employees can submit their ideas for process improvements, safety measures or cost-saving strategies directly to management. This will not only lead to actionable changes but will also give employees a sense of ownership and pride in their contributions.

In another scenario, a logistics firm can use collaborative software to crowdsource ideas to reduce delivery times.

Junior staff may be able to suggest using predictive analytics to optimise delivery routes – an idea that can potentially save the company millions of dollars annually.

These scenarios highlight the power of listening to employees at all levels and

“The younger generation, particularly Gen Z, entering the workforce is digitally savvy, collaborative and bring a fresh perspective to problem-solving. Yet, in many traditional industries, their potential often goes unnoticed or undervalued.”



Gen Z are digital natives, and they can naturally identify ways to integrate technology into workflows and improve processes.

providing them with tools to make their voices heard.

Shifting mindsets for long-term impact
Encouraging bottom-up innovation is not just about introducing new tools or holding brainstorming sessions – it requires a fundamental shift in mindset.

Leaders in traditional industries must recognise that innovation is not limited to research and development departments or executive teams. It can, and should, emerge from every corner of the organisation.

This means dismantling hierarchical silos and creating a culture where ideas are judged on their merit rather than the seniority of the person proposing them.

It also involves celebrating successes, no matter how small, to show employees that their contributions are valued.

Importantly, organisations must be prepared to invest in upskilling employees to ensure they have the tools and knowledge to drive innovation.

For Gen Z workers, this may mean training in industry-specific technologies. For older employees, it could involve learning to navigate digital platforms more effectively.

Traditional industries often pride

themselves on resilience and stability but in today's fast-changing world, adaptability is equally critical.

By embracing bottom-up innovation, these industries can tap into a wellspring of creativity and energy, particularly from younger employees who see challenges through a fresh lens.

The result? Not just a more innovative and efficient organisation but also one that attracts and retains top talent.

Being part of a company that values their ideas and contributions is a significant motivator for Gen Z workers. In an era where job-hopping is common, fostering this sense of belonging can make all the difference.

Let us move from silence to solutions by giving a voice to those who are often overlooked. By doing so, we can ensure that industries will continue to evolve and eventually eliminate the related risks of being left behind.

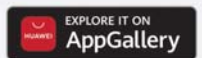
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Religions must focus on public health

ALL travellers have experienced at least one occasion when they set out on a route and yet unknowingly go off-track, only realising it when their senses tell them something is wrong.

This happens on everyone's religious journey but if we fail to realise this, we can keep going on the wrong path. A broad religious guideline is that no dangerous and unhealthy substance is to be taken into the body. Malaysia has long gone off-track.

If we assign equal weightage to three substances that should fall under the guideline - highly sweetened foods, high-nicotine cigarettes and high-alcohol liquor - we are 0%, 50% and 50% compliant, respectively. This gives us an overall compliance of only 33% out of 100%.

Malaysia has the highest number of diabetic cases in Southeast Asia, with one in six adults being diabetic. Diabetes can lead to limb amputation, blindness, kidney failure, hearing failure and nerve damage.

Malaysians are also getting obese, with the prevalence of being overweight among adults standing at 50.1%. In Malaysia, 9.7% of deaths are due to obesity as an attributing risk factor. Resulting sicknesses include diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

Diabetes is mainly caused by excessive consumption of refined white sugar put in drinks and dishes. The sugar is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream, causing a rapid spike in blood sugar levels prompting the pancreas to release a large amount of insulin to help cells absorb the sugar.

Over time, repeated spikes can lead to insulin resistance with cells becoming less responsive to insulin and more susceptible to developing Type 2 diabetes as well as cancer.

The average Malaysian takes 26 teaspoons of refined white sugar per day - more than four times the recommended maximum.

Has any religious authority recommended severe restrictions on the sale of foods laden with added sugar? Has it preached that natural sugar contained in unprocessed foods is best for health?

Next on the list is tobacco, which is inhaled into the lungs with each breath. Tobacco use has been conclusively proven to be a definite

cause of lung cancer.

It is the biggest risk factor and accounts for 23% of cancer-related deaths worldwide and 17% of all deaths in Malaysia. Individuals who smoke tobacco products increase their risk of death from stroke, coronary heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. On average, 29,457 Malaysians die from smoking each year.

Nicotine, the main stimulant in cigarettes, is the third most addictive drug after heroin and cocaine. Besides nicotine, cigarettes have other chemicals, including 60 which are known to cause cancer.

Data gathered by the Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2023 indicates that 4.8 million adult Malaysians smoke tobacco, and of this number 3.7 million smoke daily. Tobacco use continues to be an epidemic in Malaysia, with the age of initiation for smoking getting younger.

Of particular concern to the non-smoking public is that out of eight million people globally who die of tobacco use each year, 1.3 million are non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke.

There has also been an increase of 600% in the number of e-cigarette users over the past 12 years. Over this period, the prevalence of e-cigarette or vape use among those in the 15 to 24 age group jumped from 1.1% to 8.6%.

The National Anti-Drug Agency statistics show that vape devices are not only harmful to health but the use of vapes also lures young people into drug addiction.

Again, has any religious authority recommended severe restrictions on smoking and vaping? They do not because tobacco is not mentioned in any scripture.

Smoking used to be confined to the American continent and it spread around the world only beginning from the 16th century. Scriptures for the six main religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam - had been compiled well before the 10th century.

We behave like the unthinking maid who did not stop the child from playing with fire because the master's instruction was that the child must not play with water. He did not mention fire.

Fortunately, the government is not waiting for a religious push and has begun enforcing the Control of



Individuals who smoke tobacco products increase their risk of death from stroke, coronary heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. - REUTERS/SPIC

Smoking Products for Public Health Act, which covers regulations on the registration, sale, packaging, labelling and the prohibition of smoking in public places. It is a start.

Malaysia should also capitalise on a great economic opportunity here as nicotine does have some medicinal properties when used in tiny doses.

Encourage the public university research and development departments to invent a cigarette that uses only a medically permitted amount of nicotine and no addition of carcinogenic chemicals. It is all a matter of chemistry and rearranging the protons. It has already been done with liquor, and that is our third topic.

Non-Malay politicians are sometimes a disgrace to their own religion by campaigning on grounds of religious freedom for the right of non-Islamic shops to sell liquor without undue restrictions.

A recent issue was the proposal by one local council to stop the sale of alcohol in more areas. What is the problem? If you want a bottle, just travel a bit further.

The Buddha commanded: "You shall drink no maddening drink." He explained that there are "six dangers through being addicted to intoxicating liquors: actual loss of wealth, increase in quarrels, susceptibility to disease, loss of good character, indecent exposure and impaired intelligence".

When two religions emerging from vastly different civilisational regions 1,200 years apart decree the same prohibition, all the rest should take note. Do not be like the maid who said that although both the left and right neighbours instructed their maids to ensure the children do not play on the road, her master did not give such instruction. So, she let his children play on the road.

Removal of near-zero beer

The World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer states that alcohol is a group one carcinogen, putting it in

the company of tobacco.

The US surgeon-general in an advisory last month warned that alcohol consumption is the third leading preventable cause of cancer in the US, after tobacco and obesity. Drinking just once a week is tied to a 10% risk of developing an alcohol-related cancer.

Alcohol also kills or maims. Sept 2024: a company supervisor was sentenced to 10 years in jail for driving under the influence of alcohol, causing the death of another driver and leaving his three children with permanent disabilities. Aug 2024: two college students were killed when a 23-year-old motorist, believed to be driving under the influence of alcohol, skidded and entered the opposite lane. May 2024: a national kayaker had to be admitted to ICU after a drunk driver hit her motorcycle.

However, the number of fatal drunk crashes is not half as deadly as the tragic fact that Malaysia has long rejected a marvellous technological invention that reduces or removes the alcohol content in liquor. The local industry turns its back on it and politicians see this new technology as a vote-spoiler.

Spirits, wine and beer containing low or zero alcohol by volume are becoming the rage around the world because of growing public concern for health and safety. Spirits are the main target for reduction as their alcohol by volume (ABV) is at least 20%, much higher than wine and beer.

The most popular spirit in Malaysia is whiskey. One master distiller in California has won multiple awards for its zero-alcohol whiskey with a convincing bit and afterburn, reminiscent of high ABV whiskey. It is also completely free of calories, gluten and sugar.

The next target is beer as drinkers tend to down one bottle or can after another, resulting in the alcohol intake matching that of spirits.

Six years ago, a near-zero beer

was introduced to Malaysia. Instead of the standard 5% ABV, it contained less than 0.05% alcohol. It tasted like the real thing. But it was soon removed from all shelves. No explanation was given.

It could not be due to poor sales as every product inventor knows the adage: a great marketer can sell bags of sand to an Arab. It is all about creating a demand. Worldwide, low-alcohol beers have achieved a compound annual growth rate of 5.9%.

With one in three French people switching to low- or no-alcohol wine, Bordeaux winemakers have put up a new banner over the entrance to the region's world-famous vineyards: the less the alcohol, the better the wine. As with nicotine, tiny amounts of alcohol are known to have medicinal benefits.

The authorities of all religions in Malaysia need to decide whether they are keen on public health or just want to enforce strictures that were explicitly spelled out a thousand or more years ago, excluding from their concern any health dangers not specifically mentioned in scripture.

One of the main goals of religion is public health. The correct practice is to lobby the government to severely restrict the availability of refined white sugar, cigarettes and high-alcohol liquor.

Religiously permit only medically permissible amounts of any of these three substances to be consumed if the substance is not completely disallowed by the religion.

The law must come down hard. Non-compliant retail outlets must be ordered to close for one week for the first offence, two weeks for the second and three weeks for the third offence.

Penalties must be imposed for urban or rural outlets and shops or roadside stalls with no exception.

Joachim Ng champions interfaith harmony. Comments: letters@thesundaymail.com



"The authorities of all religions in Malaysia need to decide whether they are keen on public health or just want to enforce strictures that were explicitly spelled out a thousand or more years ago, excluding from their concern any health dangers not specifically mentioned in scripture."

WHAT are the primary objectives of ENGIE's partnership with UAC Bhd in advancing sustainability efforts, and how do these align with broader industry goals?

Wong: At ENGIE, we see ourselves not just as an energy provider but a catalyst for sustainable transformation in Malaysia's manufacturing sector. Our conversation with UAC started way earlier in 2015 when they sought to reduce energy consumption and their carbon footprint. Since then, we have worked hand-in-hand with UAC, progressively expanding our collaboration to provide energy-efficient solutions, starting with an overhaul of UAC's compressed air systems, which improved energy efficiency by 18% and reduced CO₂ emissions by approximately 520 tonnes annually - equivalent to planting nearly 8,500 trees.

Building on this success, we upgraded their steam plant by replacing outdated medium fuel oil (MFO) boilers with cleaner, more efficient natural gas boilers. Most recently, we helped UAC embrace green energy through the installation of a rooftop solar system. Collectively, these initiatives enable UAC to reduce over 13,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually, with minimal disruption to their operations.

These ongoing efforts reflect a long-term strategy to help UAC meet its sustainability goals while aligning with Malaysia's sustainability goals, including reducing carbon emissions by 45% by 2030 and achieving 70% renewable energy share by 2050.

By delivering tangible financial and environmental results, ENGIE is helping UAC - and the wider manufacturing sector - take actionable steps toward energy resilience and decarbonisation.

What made the partnership between ENGIE and UAC work so effectively? Are there unique synergies or shared values that other industry collaborations could emulate?

Wong: The success of our partnership with UAC lies in the alignment of our shared values, vision, and commitment to sustainability.

As a global leader in the energy transition, ENGIE has consistently led efforts to accelerate the shift towards a low-carbon economy. This long-term vision aligns perfectly with UAC's goal of reducing its environmental impact without compromising business performance.

Together, we've built a long-term partnership that goes beyond solving today's energy challenges - our focus is on working hand-in-hand with UAC to continuously optimise their energy performance, driving lasting impact for both the company and the environment.

Malaysian industries are at a critical juncture, facing significant challenges in making the shift towards more sustainable operations, due to stringent government regulations, rising energy costs and heavy reliance on fossil fuels. These pressures create both challenges and opportunities. Our partnership with UAC serves as a proven example that tailored energy solutions, combined with effective long-term energy management, can drive both operational efficiency and environmental sustainability. It demonstrates how businesses can embrace sustainability without compromising on growth.

Effective transformation begins with leadership

► ENGIE Services managing director Wong Yin Kee and UAC Bhd CEO Loon Peng Wai share their ESG journey with *SunBiz*

A key driver of this success has been our flagship Utilities-as-a-Service (UaaS) model. Through this innovative approach, we modernised the utilities infrastructure at UAC's manufacturing plant in Ipoh, integrating advanced energy-efficient technologies and taking full responsibility for operating, maintaining, and optimising the energy systems. This allows UAC to focus on its core operations while ensuring continuous improvement in energy performance. This model proves that sustainability excellence and business growth can indeed coexist.

What challenges did you encounter during the transition and how did both parties address them to ensure project success?

Loon: Embracing sustainable operations may have posed some challenges, particularly the initial investment in advanced technologies and the necessity for specialised skills. However, we firmly believe sustainability is a critical strategic business decision, not simply an environmental choice. By prioritising sustainability at all levels of our organisation, we are confident that this transition will not only boost long-term operational efficiency but also lead to significant cost savings and enhanced competitiveness. This commitment is essential for our future success.

Partnering with ENGIE has been a transformative experience for us. Their zero-capex financing model enabled us to upgrade our plant without a significant initial investment. With ENGIE covering the upfront costs and ensuring energy savings, we have already begun to experience the benefits through reduced energy bills and more predictable expenses.

Furthermore, stricter regulations have created additional challenges, but we see this as an opportunity to position UAC for long-term success. By initiating discussions on energy efficiency early and leveraging ENGIE's global expertise, we have set ourselves up for sustainable growth and compliance, establishing our position as leaders in the industry.

Wong: The transition to sustainable operations with UAC was an exciting opportunity, but like any complex project, it came with its set of challenges and considerations. Two key aspects that were particularly important to us were:

(i) Aligning expectations during the design phase.

It took time to fully understand UAC's unique needs and goals. This wasn't about providing a one-size-fits-all solution; it was about developing a tailored energy strategy that

aligned with UAC's operational objectives and long-term sustainability targets. We needed to understand the specifics of their plant operations, timelines, and key deliverables. Both our teams worked closely together to identify any potential differences, resolve them, and agree on a common set of processes and communication protocols. This collaborative approach in the early stages ensured a smooth transition and maintained momentum throughout the project.

(ii) Safety as a top priority.

At ENGIE, safety is never compromised, particularly during the implementation phase. Given the complexity of the project, we made safety a central focus from the outset. ENGIE appointed a site safety supervisor within the project management team to oversee safety and reduce dependency on contractors for managing environmental, health, and safety standards. This proactive approach ensured that our safety standards were consistently met and exceeded, allowing us to achieve zero loss-time incidents throughout the project, ensuring the safety of both our teams and UAC's staff.

How is ENGIE leveraging its global expertise in energy solutions and technologies to enhance efficiency and sustainability within UAC Bhd's operations?

Wong: Across Southeast Asia and beyond, ENGIE has enabled many industry players to adopt energy-efficient technologies and manage their energy performance, delivering measurable financial and environmental results. By combining our globally proven expertise with local implementation, we provide practical, low-risk pathways for companies like UAC to lead the charge in energy efficiency, decarbonisation, and the transition to green energy.

Through our flagship UaaS model, we finance, design, modernise, operate, and maintain UAC's utility infrastructure in Ipoh. We began by revamping UAC's compressed air systems and later modernising their steam plant, achieving significant energy savings while ensuring seamless site operations. Most recently, we enabled UAC to adopt rooftop solar installations, further reducing energy costs and their carbon footprint.

Most importantly, we help UAC to achieve these sustainability milestones with minimal to no impact on current operations and without upfront investment or risk.

Transitioning from MFO boilers to cleaner, more efficient natural gas boilers is a key aspect of this collaboration. Yin Kee, could you

please share what quantifiable environmental and economic benefits have emerged, and how replicable is this approach for other industries?

Wong: Many manufacturers in Malaysia still rely heavily on fossil fuels like medium fuel oil and diesel for their operations. However, transitioning to cleaner energy sources is becoming increasingly essential due to stricter regulations by the Malaysian government as part of its drive for a sustainable energy landscape. Some obvious indications are the recent announcement on carbon tax in Budget 2025 and the upcoming Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act.

At UAC, our success in modernising their steam plant showcases what's possible. We replaced their outdated MFO boilers with cleaner, highly efficient natural gas-fired boilers. Not only is natural gas cleaner - producing significantly lower emissions of CO₂ - it's also more cost effective than MFO, leading to reduced fuel expenses. Additionally, we overhauled the entire steam infrastructure, including a new deaerator, ensuring optimal energy performance. This particular transition resulted in a reduction of 5,360 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually.

But the success of this project extends beyond environmental impact. The comprehensive overhaul of UAC's steam infrastructure ensures the system operates at peak efficiency. By transitioning from outdated MFO boilers to cleaner, highly efficient natural gas-fired boilers, we not only reduced carbon emissions but also improved energy reliability.

This upgrade ensures UAC's auto-claving process, a critical part of their operations, continues to receive consistent, high-quality steam, meeting the company's evolving needs for both efficiency and sustainability.

The transition from MFO to natural gas is definitely a model that can be replicated across various industries. Central to this replicability is our flagship UaaS model, where we encourage industry players to partner with a reliable energy expert like ENGIE who can provide not only the advanced energy-efficient technology but also manages ongoing energy performance and system maintenance in the long term, while guarantees energy performance. This allows companies like UAC to focus on their core business - driving growth - while we manage the complexities of energy transformation.

From a leadership perspective, what insights can you share to guide other Malaysian companies on their ESG journeys?

Wong: Effective ESG transformation begins with leadership. It's not about ticking compliance boxes; it's about embedding sustainability into the core of business strategy and decision

making. By making sustainability a central pillar of your operations, you're investing in the future resilience of your business and securing long-term competitive advantage.

In many industries, there are still businesses that believe they can delay this transformation. But the reality is that waiting will cost them in the long run. Malaysia, for example, is on the fast track to achieving its net-zero targets, and businesses must prepare now.

Even if policies such as carbon taxes or regulatory documentation requirements are yet to apply to your industry, now is the time to act. I would recommend a few key principles:

One, take a holistic approach. ESG should be integrated into all aspects of a company's operations, from energy procurement and supply chain management to customer engagement and reporting.

Two, develop a comprehensive decarbonisation roadmap. This allows businesses to set internal benchmarks and proactively prepare for future regulations.

Three, partner with a reliable energy expert. A good partner can ease the transition with a zero-capex model and proven expertise.

As policies tighten, early adopters won't just comply - they'll innovate, lead, and set new industry standards, just like UAC. ESG transformation is a shared responsibility, and the time to start is now.

Loon: The most important thing is to continue emphasising ESG culture. It's crucial to foster a mindset that prioritises sustainability and ethics at all levels of the organisation. Then, implementing effective ESG strategies not only mitigates risks but also strengthens your company's reputation, giving you a significant edge over competitors in the market.

What are your views on the government's strong push for energy transition and initiatives? How do you see these shaping the industry's sustainability landscape?

Wong: The government's recent push for energy transition, especially in the last two to three years, reflects ambitious goals paired with more structured initiatives. The National Energy Transition Roadmap aims to accelerate Malaysia's energy transition towards net zero emissions by 2050, signalling a clear commitment to this cause. Additionally, state authorities such as the Penang Green Council have launched the Penang Energy Framework in November 2024, showing that this commitment is not just national.

Overall, the government, together with the private sector and financial institutions, is creating a strong, supportive ecosystem to help Malaysia transition to a more sustainable future.

We're excited to be part of this journey.



'Well-regulated policy needed for vape industry to grow responsibly'

BY JOHN GILBERT
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KUALA LUMPUR: Industry players believe Malaysia's Ministry of Health should focus on enforcing Act 852 to ensure compliance rather than re-opening discussions on a blanket ban on vaping and vape products.

They argue that a total vape ban would not be effective in addressing concerns, but a well-regulated policy will allow the industry to grow responsibly.

Act 852, or the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024, regulates the sale, packaging and use of tobacco products, including vape.

Malaysian Vape Chamber of Commerce secretary-general Ridhwan Rosli said any sudden policy reversal would only create further uncertainty and undermine progress.

"The vape industry has always supported responsible regulations. A total ban has long been proven ineffective. The reality is that bans do not eliminate demand. They merely push products into the black market, making them unregulated and harder to control."

"Instead, a well-regulated industry ensures quality standards, prevents access to minors, and provides adult consumers with less harmful alternatives," he told *SunBiz*.

Ridhwan was responding to Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, who said Putrajaya could regulate the sale of such products to specific groups via Act 852.

Another report said the Health Ministry was ready to reconsider a full ban on vaping if the situation demanded it.

Ridhwan noted Act 852 is being implemented in stages, beginning last year with the ban on public display outside specialised stores and prohibitions on online and vending machine sales.

The next phase comes into effect on April 1, 2025, with the retail display ban, followed by compliance with packaging and labelling regulations by Oct 1, 2025.

"Given that enforcement is still ongoing, time should be given for all stakeholders, including industry players, to adapt to these regulations fully," he said.

As for concerns about non-smokers taking up vaping, Ridhwan said MVCC stands firm that vape products are intended only for adult smokers looking to quit.

"Rather than ineffective bans, what is needed is education to ensure that vaping remains a harm reduction tool, not a gateway for non-smokers. This must be coupled with strong enforcement to prevent underage access and ensure responsible retail practices," he said.

Malaysian Vapers Alliance president Khairil Azizi Khairuddin said as a consumer advocacy group, it believes the priority should be on education to help both smokers and non-smokers understand the role of vaping as a harm reduction tool.

"Restricting vape sales only to smokers looking to quit oversimplifies the issue and ignores the need for informed decision-making. At the same time, we recognise that regulations must be backed by proper enforcement to ensure responsible sales and prevent underage access."

Malaysia set to gain from hike in Indonesian CPO export levy

BY HAYATUN RAZAK
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PETALING JAYA: Industry experts opine that an increase in Indonesia's crude palm oil (CPO) export levy will enhance demand for Malaysian CPO, rendering it more competitively priced.

According to TA Securities, demand for Malaysian palm oil could rise if Indonesia implements its plan to raise the export levy to support a higher biodiesel usage mandate.

The research house said that raising the export levy to 10% would increase the price of Indonesian CPO by US\$26.49 (RM117.90) per tonne, making it even more expensive than Malaysian palm oil. It noted that the price of palm oil from Indonesia currently stands at a premium of US\$146.30 per tonne compared to Malaysia's.

"We believe that the relatively high Indonesian CPO export tax and duty could drive demand towards Malaysian CPO, supporting

Buyers could turn to more competitively priced crude palm oil from other sources if Jakarta increases tax, say experts

its price and market share," it said.

Indonesia imposes an export levy on CPO and other palm oil products to fund its biodiesel programme, specifically the B40 mandate, which aims to increase the blend of palm-based biofuel in diesel to 40%.

In December 2024, the Indonesian government announced plans to raise the CPO export levy from 7.5% to 10% to support higher subsidies for the biodiesel programme. However, the implementation of the B40 mandate has faced delays, and industry observers anticipate a gradual rollout due to funding challenges and technical hurdles.

SGS lead auditor Mohd Syafiq Zawawi said that with the new implementation by Indonesia,

buyers and customers may turn to Malaysia, where export costs will be lower. "This is especially true for price-sensitive markets like India, China, and Pakistan, where buyers want to reduce costs," he told *SunBiz*.

Mohd Syafiq said the palm oil industry in Malaysia may then focus on improving production and increasing yields to meet growing demand and boost earnings. "Furthermore, the industry can also start focusing on investing more in sustainability and new technology to maintain production yields and support future volume growth."

Echoing Mohd Syafiq, Malaysia Productivity Corporation consultant Anis Marina Abd Wahab said Indonesia's higher export levy may make Malaysian CPO relatively

more price competitive in the global market.

She said this could potentially shift demand towards Malaysian producers, especially among buyers seeking to reduce costs.

"The Malaysian palm oil sector could benefit from this increased demand, boosting export revenue and enhancing its role in the global supply chain. Malaysia can position itself strategically as a stable and reliable supplier of CPO, leveraging its robust infrastructure and commitment to sustainability," she added.

KLK Alami Edible Oils Sdn Bhd sales and marketing manager, refinery division Aslam Hizir said Malaysia's CPO market share will likely increase with Indonesia's new export levy. "As Indonesian CPO becomes pricier, buyers might shift their demand to Malaysian CPO, potentially increasing Malaysia's market share in the global palm oil market," he added.

Meanwhile, Roundtable Sustainability Palm Oil certification manager Mohd Razaleigh Mohamad said Indonesia's decision to increase the CPO export levy will significantly impact global demand for Malaysian CPO. "This price difference could drive global buyers to turn to Malaysia for their palm oil needs."

IcebergX Sdn Bhd senior proprietary trader David Ng agreed that any increase in Indonesia's export duty on palm oil would make Malaysia palm oil prices more competitive. "Thus, we will see higher demand for Malaysia palm oil given the lower prices," he said.

The anticipated rise in demand presents an opportunity for Malaysia to strengthen its position as a stable and reliable CPO supplier in the global market. Malaysia, the world's second largest producer and exporter of crude palm oil, could enhance its competitiveness while leveraging its existing infrastructure and commitment to sustainable practices while capitalising on Indonesia's higher export costs.



As global buyers seek more affordable alternatives, Malaysian CPO producers stand to benefit from increased sales and stronger market positioning in the palm oil industry. - **BERNAMAPIC**

Govt will ensure oil palm plantations have enough workers

KUALA LUMPUR: The government, through the Plantation and Commodities Ministry, is committed to ensuring oil palm plantations have sufficient workers so that production remains consistent and is not adversely affected.

Plantation and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani said a shortage of workers could lead to palm fruits not being harvested when they ripen, which in turn would affect production.

"Additionally, for smallholders, the government will ensure they

use good planting materials and

adopt good agricultural practices in order to increase yields. This will help reduce production cost and boost global market demand," he said during a question-and-answer session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He was responding to a supplementary question by Edwin anak Banta (GPS-Selangau) about the ministry's measures to address the decline in palm oil prices, including strategies to stabilise prices, increase demand, and

explore new markets.

Meanwhile, Bakri Jamaluddin (PN-Tangga Batu) asked about the effectiveness of the Institute of Malaysian Plantation and Commodities and the Mechanisation and Automation Research Consortium of Oil Palm in reducing dependence on foreign workers.

Johari said mechanisation was introduced as a solution due to locals not being keen on working in the plantation sector.

"Since this kind of work still does not appeal to local workers, mecha-

nisation has been introduced as a solution. Now, with the use of technology, dependence on manual labour is gradually decreasing, but it is still enough," he said.

In addition to mechanisation, Johari stressed the importance of the replanting rate in ensuring continuous productivity.

"If we want to increase yields, we must achieve a replanting rate of at least 4%. Currently, the rate is only about 2% to 3%, which shows that many oil palm trees have reached maturity," he said. - **Bernama**



Gobind (centre) and other dignitaries at the launch of Future Connected: 5G Advanced yesterday.

NAIO ramps up integration of AI into various sectors

➤ Ministries setting up 'centres of excellence' to identify challenges and implement artificial intelligence-driven solutions

BY AIMIE SHAZRI
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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's newly formed National AI Office (NAIO) is ramping up efforts to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into transport, healthcare, agriculture, small and medium enterprises, and government digital services.

Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo said ministries overseeing these sectors are establishing "centres of excellence", led by government officials, to identify challenges and implement AI-driven solutions. "This structured approach is expected to streamline AI adoption and innovation across critical industries."

He disclosed that the government is reviewing its GovTech Policy, which was originally introduced in March 2020.

"Given the rapid advancements in AI and emerging technologies, policymakers are working to update the framework to ensure it remains relevant and effective. The review is expected to be completed within the next two to three weeks, with a targeted relaunch in Q1 2025," Gobind told reporters at the launch of Future Connected: 5G Advance at The Exchange 106 yesterday.

At the event, Digital Nasional Bhd (DNB), in partnership with Ericsson, introduced 5G Advance, a next-generation connectivity technology that integrates ultra-low latency and AI, marking a significant step in the country's digital transformation.

"This advancement is expected to accelerate automation, enhance efficiency, and provide real-time AI-driven solutions for various industries, including transport, healthcare, agriculture, and small businesses," said Gobind.

He noted that, unlike conventional 5G systems relying on manual configurations and expert feedback, 5G Advance leverages AI to analyse industry-specific needs autonomously.

"This allows businesses to implement tailored, intelligent network solutions more quickly, reducing setup time and improving overall connectivity. As industries evolve, AI will continuously optimise network performance to ensure seamless scalability."

Gobind said another key area under government scrutiny is the potential impact of DeepSeek technology, an innovative and cost-effective solution for data management and energy efficiency.

"While some nations have raised concerns

over data security and compliance, Malaysia sees this as an opportunity to enhance its position as a regional data hub. We are currently studying how the country can leverage new technological advancements while maintaining regulatory standards," he added.

The minister said the rise of AI and next-generation connectivity is expected to benefit Malaysia's SMEs and MSMEs, which form a critical part of the economy.

"With 5G Advance, small businesses can leverage AI-driven tools to enhance productivity, improve customer experiences, and optimise logistics. This initiative aligns with the government's vision to drive digital inclusivity and economic growth through technology."

As digital infrastructure rapidly evolves, Gobind said, Malaysia is focused on ensuring that its policies and regulations support emerging innovations.

"The Digital and Communications ministries are working closely with stakeholders to ensure AI and 5G Advance integration align with industry needs and global standards. This proactive approach aims to position Malaysia as a leader in digital transformation within Southeast Asia."

With 5G Advance, AI-powered solutions, and digital policy reforms, he added, Malaysia is set to accelerate its transition into a high-tech economy.

"These initiatives will strengthen connectivity, improve industrial efficiency, and drive economic competitiveness, solidifying the nation's role as a hub for technological innovation in the region," said Gobind.

Malaysia remains committed to being an open economy: Minister

KUALA LUMPUR: The government has reaffirmed its commitment to maintain Malaysia as an open economy that relies on international trade and is taking strategic steps to reconcile the country's interests with policy changes implemented by the new administration in the United States.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said Malaysia will capitalise on opportunities for strengthening relations and cooperation with the US.

He noted that the US administration's "America First" foreign policy has the potential to change the country's approach to foreign relations and thus indirectly impact Malaysia.

"As a nation whose economy relies heavily on trade, we will certainly feel the effects either directly or indirectly. However, we are carefully monitoring the situation, and reports will be presented to the Cabinet from time to time," he said during a question-and-answer session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He was responding to a question from Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin (PN-Larut) who inquired about how Malaysia, as the chair of Asean, would reconcile the bloc's relations with BRICS given the economic threat against the latter from newly elected President Donald Trump's administration.

Mohamad pointed out that Malaysia's foreign policy supports the principles of multilateralism that enable the nation and the international community to address increasingly urgent global challenges.

According to him, Malaysia remains committed to forging cooperation with other countries, which has enabled Malaysia to become a BRICS partner country.

Existing BRICS member countries will also assess the extent of Malaysia's commitment before fully accepting it as a member of the bloc, he said.

Mohamad said intra-Asean trade accounts for less than 25% of total trade although the region has a population of nearly 700 million.

"This is one of Asean's strengths, and that's why we have seen various initiatives, including how we can form joint development areas (JDA).

"For example, Malaysia and Thailand already have a JDA. Similarly, with Singapore, we have agreed to establish the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone, which will further boost the economies of both countries," he said.

Various other initiatives have also been introduced, the minister said.

"We want to ensure that intra-Asean trade surpasses RM3 trillion by 2030," he added. — Bernama

Isuzu maintains status as Malaysia's most popular truck brand

PETALING JAYA: Isuzu has once again emerged as Malaysia's top-selling truck brand for 2024 as the company achieved another year of stable sales performance amid evolving market conditions.

This feat places Isuzu at the number one spot for light-duty truck segments, successfully leading the brand to become the most popular overall truck brand in the market for 11 consecutive years. In the light-duty segment, Isuzu has been leading for 15 consecutive years.

Isuzu Malaysia CEO Shunsuke Okazoe said achieving the market-leader position in Malaysia for light-duty truck segments and being the most popular overall truck brand is a solid testament to the deep trust and confidence customers have continuously shown in Isuzu commercial vehicles.

"As a leading Japanese truck maker with

global distribution, Isuzu has always been steadfast in our commitment to offering the best-in-quality commercial vehicles and after-sales support that our customers need for optimised efficiency and sustainability of their business," he said.

Shunsuke said the global trucking industry has been facing unprecedented challenges in recent years.

He added that the industry continues to evolve and thrive in Malaysia, driven by various economic and environmental factors.

These factors have given rise to several trends, such as regulatory changes and technology's growing application for better efficiency and cleaner emissions.

"Due to this, the nature of our customers' business is also changing as new demands grow.

"At Isuzu, our goal is to constantly innovate and offer the best transport solutions that will

enhance delivery responsiveness and efficiency, improve customer experience and support the push for decarbonisation for our customers.

"In essence, we are unwavering in helping our customers increase their competitive edge in today's transformative logistics industry by introducing new trucks which deliver better efficiency and cleaner emission," he said.

Okazoe said Isuzu remains committed to staying ahead of the competition through its vision, strategy and execution by working closely with all stakeholders.

"We believe that better transport leads to a better life. With a vision to become a global innovation leader and lead the way in bringing positive changes to transport solutions, we would like to reaffirm our continuous commitment to customers, partners and industry and to create a profound impact on Malaysia's logistics value chain," Okazoe said.



Mohamad gestures as he speaks during a question-and-answer session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

BR Capital in pact to support Kopetro members

Deal will allow members of Petronas co-op to gain wider access to fixed income investments and diversify portfolios

KUALA LUMPUR: Bursa Malaysia RAM Capital Sdn Bhd (BR Capital), a joint venture entity between Bursa Malaysia Bhd and RAM Holdings Bhd (RAM), recently signed a memorandum of collaboration (MoC) with Koperasi Kakitangan Petronas Bhd (Kopetro) to explore initiatives to expand access to fixed-income investments and enhance financial inclusion for Kopetro members.

Under the terms of the MoC, BR Capital and Kopetro will cooperate to expand access to fixed income instruments available on the BR Capital platform such as credit-rated investment notes, to Kopetro's extensive member network.

This will enable members to diversify their investment portfolios and expand income streams for long-term wealth creation, fostering greater participation in Malaysia's growing fixed-income space.

Another focus of this collaboration is to raise investor awareness of new investment opportunities on the BR Capital platform.

This will be achieved through educational initiatives and outreach programmes to inform Kopetro members of the benefits and potential of fixed-income investments for wealth preservation and growth.

In addition, both parties will explore further initiatives that align with their shared interests and long-term objectives.

The MoC was signed by Bursa Malaysia CEO and BR Capital chairman Datuk Muhamad Umar Swift and Kopetro CEO Ahmad Shakir Ahmad Ubaidah.

Ahmad Shakir said this collaboration marks a significant step in expanding investment opportunities for 15,000 Kopetro members, providing them access to BR Capital's fundraising and investing platform.

"Through this partnership, members will have the opportunity to explore a wider range of investment instruments that can potentially generate sustainable returns while aligning with responsible financial principles.

"By leveraging BR Capital's expertise and structured offerings, we aim to empower members with more diversified and strategic investment options, ultimately strengthening their financial resilience and long-term growth," he said.

Muhamad Umar said this MoC represents a significant step in BR Capital's ambition to broaden the investor base within Malaysia's capital market.

"Together with Kopetro, we seek to empower its members' investing journey, providing them with opportunities to diversify their portfolios and create wealth through high-quality investment notes on our platform.

"We are optimistic this collaboration will cultivate a dynamic investment environment that benefits issuers and investors, as well as the broader Malaysian economy," Muhamad Umar said.

SD Guthrie's deal boosts presence in non-palm sectors: PublicInvest

KUALA LUMPUR: SD Guthrie Bhd's recent acquisition of 48% equity interest in Netherlands-based Marvesa Supply Chain Services (MSCS) for €54 million (or RM250 million) would allow the former to strengthen its presence in non-palm sectors.

In addition, SD Guthrie can tap into MSCS's existing customer base for its certified sustainable palm oil products, which account for 12% of the global supply.

Public Investment Bank Bhd (PublicInvest) said MSCS could also tap into SD Guthrie's strong presence in Southeast Asia's palm oil industry through the deal.

To recap, SD Guthrie acquired a 48% equity interest in MSCS to penetrate into the European animal feed and biofuel industries.

"We believe this acquisition would help strengthen its presence in the European oils and fats industry. However, given the lack of financial information such as earnings and profitability of this company, we are unable to assess its impact on the group at this juncture," PublicInvest said in a report.

The bank-backed research firm said the 48% stake was purchased from Parcom, a Dutch private equity firm, for €54 million while the remaining 52% stake is held by BGR Beheer B.V., which is owned by the current management of MSCS.

MSCS is a long-established industry player in the European market specialising in the sourcing, blending and distribution of oils and fats to the animal feed and biofuel industries.

The company has a diversified pool of customers in 11 countries comprising traders, distributors, and multinational feed producers.

It has a refinery based in Zwijndrecht with an annual capacity of 300,000mt.

The refinery produces a variety of oils and fats that are widely used for industrial frying, emulsifiers, bakery and confectionary ingredients, margarine, dairy products, candles, and milk substitutes.

In addition to the Netherlands, MSCS has a presence in Indonesia to meet the increasing demand for animal feed ingredients.

MSCS also has an established trading arm in lecithin, soy and other soft oils.

Meanwhile, PublicInvest said SD Guthrie's Q4'24 results are expected to be released on Feb 27.

The research firm expects to see better results due to stronger CPO prices.

PublicInvest maintains a neutral call on SD Guthrie with an unchanged target price of RM4.85 based on 20x FY25 earnings per share.

Importers and local businesses now receive their packages two hours earlier for inbound shipments from Asia, Europe, and the US. - PEXELS PIX



FedEx speeds up import shipments to Johor

KUALA LUMPUR: Federal Express Corporation (FedEx) is enhancing its inbound shipping service to serve customers better who are importing into Johor.

Importers and local businesses now receive their packages two hours earlier for inbound shipments from Asia, Europe, and the US.

FedEx Malaysia managing director Tien Long Woon said improving the speed of its services is essential for businesses looking to thrive in today's competitive environment.

"We understand that time is of the essence, and with faster delivery of imports, we are enhancing the efficiency of local businesses in

Johor and improving their flexibility to serve their own customers better," he said.

Import shipments from Asia, Europe, and the US into Johor are routed to the FedEx Gateway in Singapore before journeying to the FedEx Senai Gateway, which offers customers the benefit of direct clearance at Senai customs.

Previously, these shipments were routed through Kuala Lumpur before making a 300km trip to Senai for processing and delivery. This change is particularly beneficial for industries that rely heavily on timely imports including manufacturing, retail, and e-commerce.

The Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone

(JS-SEZ) is poised to significantly enhance economic connectivity between Johor and Singapore, focusing on key sectors such as electronics, medical equipment, food manufacturing, and data centres.

In 2023, Johor's economy demonstrated robust growth, with a 4.1% year-over-year increase in GDP, surpassing the national average of 3.6%.

This growth was primarily driven by the services and manufacturing sectors contributing around 84% of Johor's GDP.

Additionally, Johor accounted for approximately 29% of Malaysia's total trade in

2023, amounting to RM753.1 billion.

The JS-SEZ initiative is expected to attract substantial foreign direct investment, create numerous job opportunities and further solidify Johor's position as a key economic hub in the region.

As Johor continues to grow as a key economic hub in Malaysia, FedEx remains dedicated to fostering local businesses' success and contributing to the region's economic development.

The accelerated delivery service is just one of many ways FedEx is working to drive growth for its customers.



Hong Kong's economic growth slows to 2.5% in 2024

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's economic growth slowed to 2.5% in 2024 as residents increasingly look to spend elsewhere, the city's government said, warning that the year ahead will bring "heightened uncertainties".

The Chinese financial hub saw a post-pandemic rebound in 2023 after the city reopened to international business and travel but lost some momentum as China's economic slowdown deepened.

Gross domestic product increased by 2.5% in real terms in 2024, compared with 3.2% growth the year before, according to preliminary figures released by the city's government.

"Private consumption expenditure recorded a slight decline, affected by the change in residents' consumption patterns," a government spokesman said.

Increasing numbers of Hong Kong residents are choosing to spend in neighbouring Shenzhen since travel resumed, preferring its cheaper groceries, entertainment and even healthcare services.

Private consumption dropped by 0.6% year-on-year, while other major

GDP components all recorded growth.

Financial secretary Paul Chan predicted at the start of last year growth of up to 3.5%, but revised down his estimate in November to 2.5%.

The government said it expected Hong Kong's economy to grow in 2025 "despite heightened uncertainties in the external environment".

"Trade protectionist policies implemented by the United States may disrupt global trade flows and adversely affect Hong Kong's goods exports," the Hong Kong government spokesman warned.

"They may also lead to a slower pace of interest rate cuts in the US and keep the Hong Kong dollar strong for longer."

However, Hong Kong's economy would benefit from Beijing's efforts to stimulate growth and bolster market confidence, he said.

The Chinese finance hub had been strained by the high interest rate environment because its currency is pegged to the greenback, with heightened borrowing costs holding back consumption and investment. — AFP



A general view of the skyline buildings in Hong Kong. — REUTERS/PIC

China slaps tariffs on American energy, vehicles

➤ Beijing starts anti-monopoly investigation into Google and imposes controls on rare earth exports

BEIJING: China yesterday slapped tariffs on some American imports in a swift response to new US duties on Chinese goods, renewing a trade war between the world's top two economies even as President Donald Trump offered reprieves to Mexico and Canada.

Additional 10% tariff across all Chinese imports into the US came into effect at 12.01am EST (1.01pm in Malaysia) yesterday after Trump repeatedly warned Beijing it was not doing enough to halt the flow of illicit drugs into the United States.

Within minutes, China's Finance Ministry said it would impose levies of 15% for US coal and LNG and 10% for crude oil, farm equipment and some autos.

China also said it was starting an anti-monopoly investigation in Alphabet Inc's Google, while including both PVH Corp the holding company for brands including Calvin Klein, and US biotechnology company Illumina on its "unreliable entities list".

Separately, China's Commerce Ministry and its Customs Administration said it is imposing export controls some rare earths and metals that are critical for hi-tech gadgets and the clean energy transition.

China's new tariffs on the targeted US exports will start on Feb 10, the ministry said, giving Washington and Beijing some time to try and reach a deal.

Trump plans to speak to China President Xi Jinping later in the week, a White House spokesman said.

Trump on Monday suspended his threat of 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada at the last minute, agreeing to a 30-day pause in return for concessions on border and crime enforcement with the two neighbouring countries.

During his first term in 2018, Trump initiated a brutal two-year trade war with China over its massive US trade surplus, with tit-for-tat tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars worth of goods upending global supply chains and damaging the world economy.

"The trade war is in the early stages so the likelihood of further tariffs is high," Oxford Economics said in a note as it downgraded its China economic growth forecast.

Trump warned he might increase tariffs on China further unless Beijing stemmed the flow of fentanyl, a deadly opioid, into the US. "China hopefully is going to stop sending

us fentanyl, and if they're not, the tariffs are going to go substantially higher," he said on Monday.

China has called fentanyl America's problem and said it would challenge the tariffs at the World Trade Organisation and take other countermeasures, but also left the door open for talks.

The US is a relatively small source of crude oil for China, accounting for 1.7% of its imports last year, worth about US\$6 billion (RM26.7 billion).

Just over 5% of China's LNG imports come from the US.

Crude prices extended losses to tumble 2% after China's retaliation, and stocks in Hong Kong pared gains.

The dollar strengthened while the Chinese yuan, the euro, Australian and Canadian dollars as well as the Mexican peso all fell, reflecting growing market concerns about the risk of a protracted global trade war.

"Unlike Canada and Mexico, it is clearly harder for the US and China to agree on what Trump demands economically and politically," said Gary Ng, senior economist at Natixis in Hong Kong.

"The previous market optimism on a quick deal still looks uncertain

"Even if the two countries can agree on some issues, it is possible to see tariffs being used as a recurrent tool, which can be a key source of market volatility this year." — Reuters

Stocks rally after Mexico, Canada reach deal with US to delay duties

HONG KONG: Asian equities rose with the Mexican peso and Canadian dollar yesterday after Donald Trump said he would delay the imposition of stiff tariffs on imports from the US neighbours, soothing trade war worries for now.

But early euphoria was tempered somewhat after China announced levies on some imports of US goods as Washington's measures kicked in, with no news that the two sides had reached an agreement to pause.

Markets from Japan to New York were sent tumbling on Monday after news at the weekend that Trump had signed off 25% duties against Mexico and Canada, fanning concerns for the global economy.

Hours before the tariffs were due to take effect, Trump said he had struck deals with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum on immigration and fentanyl, and would postpone the measures for a month.

Talks on final deals would continue with both countries, he added.

News of the deals with Mexico and Canada saw the Mexican peso surge more than 3% — having tumbled to a three-year low on Monday — before paring the gains slightly. The Canadian dollar jumped more than 1%.

Asian stock markets also advanced, though unease about the lack of movement on the Chinese tariffs saw traders' early optimism fade.

Hong Kong, which rose more than 3% in the morning, was up more than 1%, while Tokyo, Seoul, Manila, Sydney, Mumbai, Bangkok, Wellington and Taipei were also in the green.

The euro and pound extended losses after Trump warned the European Union would be next in the firing line, while he did not rule out tariffs against Britain.

"A risk is that this is the beginning of a tit-for-tat trade war, which could result in lower GDP growth everywhere, higher US inflation, a stronger dollar and upside pressure on US interest rates," said Stephen Dover, chief market strategist and head of Franklin Templeton Institute. — AFP

Indian govt will not undertake direct debt switch with RBI: Official

NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank of India's holding of sovereign bonds due to mature next financial year will likely be treated at par with the market by the government rather than swapped for longer-dated debt, a top government official said.

The RBI holds around one trillion rupees (RM51 billion) of bonds maturing next financial year, as per market estimates, and the government was expected to swap these for longer-dated debt before the budget on

Saturday, a practice undertaken in earlier years that typically means a smaller gross borrowing target.

However, it did not do so this time and, as a result, the gross borrowing target for 2025-26 was raised to 14.82 trillion rupees from 14.01 trillion rupees in the current fiscal year.

"In a normal course what the government is expected to do is, go to the market, issue those bonds ... give it to the bondholders. These bondholders can be public, institutions or RBI,"

India's Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said.

"The government would like to deal with that issue through a market-based operation rather than do a bilateral deal."

The government aims to conduct a switch target of 2.50 trillion rupees in the next financial year, but there is no specific amount earmarked for buybacks.

This financial year, the government bought back bonds worth 882 billion rupees as it intended to keep as little cash as feasible, Seth said. — Reuters

Trump orders creation of US sovereign wealth fund

➤ Funding mechanism unclear, president says it could buy TikTok

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Monday ordering the creation of a sovereign wealth fund within the next year, saying it could potentially buy the short video app TikTok.

If created, the sovereign wealth fund could place the United States alongside numerous other countries, particularly in the Middle East and Asia, that have launched similar funds as a way to make direct investments with government dollars.

The text of the executive order was sparse on details, and simply directed the Treasury and Commerce Departments to submit a

plan for such a fund within 90 days, including recommendations on "funding mechanisms, investment strategies, fund structure and a governance model".

Typically such funds rely on a country's budget surplus to make investments, but the US operates at a deficit.

Its creation also would likely require approval from Congress.

"We're going to create a lot of wealth for the fund," Trump told reporters.

"And I think it's about time that this country had a sovereign wealth fund."

Trump had previously floated such a government investment vehicle as a presidential candidate, saying it could fund "great national endeavours" like infrastructure projects such as highways and airports, manufacturing and medical research.

Administration officials do not say how the fund would operate or be financed, but Trump has

previously said it could be funded by "tariffs and other intelligent things".

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told reporters the fund would be set up within the next 12 months.

"We're going to monetise the asset side of the US balance sheet for the American people."

"There'll be a combination of liquid assets, assets that we have in this country as we work to bring them out for the American people."

Several experts said Congress would likely need to authorise new funding given the lack of an existing surplus to tap.

Investors said the news came as a surprise.

"Creating a sovereign wealth fund suggests that a country has savings that will go up and can be allocated to this," said Colin Graham, head of multi-asset strategies at Robeco in London.

"The economic rules of thumb don't add up."

There are over 90 such funds across the world managing over US\$8 trillion (RM35 trillion) in assets, according to the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds.

In another surprise twist, Trump suggested the wealth fund could buy TikTok, whose fate has been up in the air since a law requiring its Chinese owner ByteDance to either sell it on national security grounds or face a ban that took effect on Jan 19.

Trump, after taking office on Jan 20, signed an executive order seeking to delay by 75 days the enforcement of the law.

Trump has said that he was in talks with multiple people over TikTok's purchase and would likely have a decision on the app's future this month.

The popular app has about 170 million American users.

"We're going to be doing something, perhaps with TikTok, and perhaps not," Trump said.



(From left) Bessent speaking as Trump and commerce secretary nominee Howard Lutnick look on in the White House. —AFP/IC

Tyson Foods boosts annual sales forecast

NEW YORK: Tyson Foods raised its annual sales forecast on Monday as robust demand for its beef and chicken products helped the meat packer beat estimates for first-quarter results.

The US company expects fiscal 2025 sales to be flat to up 1%, compared with its prior forecast of flat to down 1%.

Tyson also raised its annual adjusted operating income forecast to between US\$1.9 billion (RM8.4 billion) and US\$2.3 billion, from the previous range of US\$1.8 billion to US\$2.2 billion, driven by lower animal feed costs and efforts to cut costs and streamline operations.

A gradual recovery in restaurant traffic is helping revive Tyson's wholesale supply to fast-food and fine-dining chains, while sustained eat-at-home trends have supported demand for its meat products.

Sales in Tyson's beef segment, its largest, were up 6.2% in the quarter ended Dec 28, while prices were up 0.6% and volumes rose 5.6%.

Chicken volumes rose 1.5%.

The firm's net sales rose 2.28% to US\$13.62 billion in the first quarter, compared with analysts' estimates of US\$13.44 billion, according to data compiled by LSEG. — Reuters

Ecopetrol renews JV with Occidental

BOGOTA: Colombian energy company Ecopetrol said on Monday it has reached an agreement to renew its oil joint venture (JV) with Occidental Petroleum in the US Permian basin in Texas.

There had been uncertainty over the future of the joint venture after Ecopetrol, which is majority state owned, backed out of a separate deal last August to acquire US\$3.6 billion (RM16 billion) of other assets in the Permian basin from Occidental on the orders of Colombia's President Gustavo Petro.

Petro has made weaning the Andean country away from fossil fuels a key goal of his government.

"With this investment plan in 2025 from Ecopetrol Permian, to develop assets in the Midland and Delaware sub-basins, we could be drilling about 91 development wells, with an investment that exceeds US\$880 million," Ecopetrol CEO Ricardo Roa said in a statement.

The two companies agreed a separate contract to develop the Delaware sub-basin until 2027, the statement added.

Ecopetrol's operations in the Permian basin have boosted the company's production significantly.

In the first nine months of 2024, the company's oil and gas output in the Permian rose by just under 62% to 95,200 barrels of oil equivalent per day (boed), according to Ecopetrol's third-quarter report published last November, even as the firm's production declined elsewhere.

The contract extension and subsequent work will allow Ecopetrol to produce close to 90,000 boed, Roa added, without specifying if that was in addition to already established production. — Reuters

Nokia signs multi-year expansion deal with AT&T

HELSINKI: US telecoms operator AT&T and Finnish network equipment maker Nokia have signed a multi-year expansion agreement to upgrade AT&T's voice carriage and 5G network automation in the US, the Finnish company said yesterday.

The deal comes a year after Nokia lost a major contract with AT&T to its Swedish rival Ericsson, which the US operator chose at the end of 2023 to build a telecoms network that will cover 70% of its wireless traffic in the United States by late 2026.

After AT&T's US\$14 billion (RM62

billion) five-year deal with Ericsson, Nokia announced in September a smaller five-year deal with AT&T to build a fibre network in the US, before locking a second one yesterday for cloud-based voice core applications and the use of Nokia's network automation software.

"This is an important deal for Nokia, reinforcing the strong and longstanding relationship between Nokia and AT&T, and covering multiple years and technologies that will enable new 5G functionality," Raghav Sahgal, president of cloud

and network services at Nokia, told Reuters in an e-mail.

Nokia said the upgrade to AT&T's core network would enable new voice services, such as the integration of AI and machine learning capabilities.

The companies declined to reveal the value of the deal.

"We are pleased to continue our relationship with Nokia to further optimise our network operations and enable new services that better support our customers' evolving needs," senior vice-president Yigal Elbaz of AT&T's Technology & Network Services said.

Last week, Nokia reported stronger-than-expected fourth-quarter adjusted operating profit and sales, helped by higher demand for telecoms gear from mobile operators in North America and India, and was upbeat about 2025 prospects.

To tap the artificial intelligence boom, Nokia agreed to buy Infinera in a US\$2.3 billion deal last year to gain from the billions of dollars in investment pouring into data centres such as the US\$500 billion Stargate project backed by OpenAI, SoftBank and Oracle. — Reuters

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JAKARTA: Indonesia is setting up a state investment agency that will manage government holdings in some of the country's biggest firms, after Parliament yesterday approved the vehicle which is intended to operate like Singapore's investment arm Temasek.

The creation of the Daya Anagata Nusantara Investment Management Agency, or Danantara, was announced soon after President Prabowo Subianto took office in October, with the aim of improving the performance and returns from state investments.

Danantara's initial capital will be at least 1,000 trillion rupiah (RM271 billion), and Parliament deputy speaker Sufmi Dasco Ahmad told reporters it will take over all government holdings in state companies from the State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) Ministry.

State companies, which in 2023 had a combined assets worth 11,684.3 trillion rupiah, play a dominant role in Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

They paid 82.1 trillion rupiah in dividends to the finance ministry in 2023, official data showed.

Indonesia to set up state investment agency

➤ Venture could boost SOEs, but susceptible to political influence: CreditSights

"Danantara is officially set up and formed in order to consolidate the management of state-owned companies and optimise the management of dividends and investments," SOE Minister Erick Thohir told Parliament.

The state companies include leading lenders Bank Mandiri, Bank Rakyat Indonesia, and Bank Negara Indonesia, electricity utility PLN, miner MIND ID, energy firm Pertamina, telco company Telkom

Indonesia and cement maker Semen Indonesia.

The idea behind Danantara is to replicate the success of Singapore's Temasek, which had a portfolio value of US\$284 billion in investments globally as of last March and a 14% total shareholder return since its inception in 1974, according to its website.

Lawmakers and government officials did not provide details for Danantara's plans going forward.

Danantara's office did not respond to requests for comments.

Toto Pranoto, a University of Indonesia lecturer who was a consultant for the Bill, told Reuters that Danantara will set up two entities – a "superholding" that manages state companies and an investment firm that manages dividends and leverages assets.

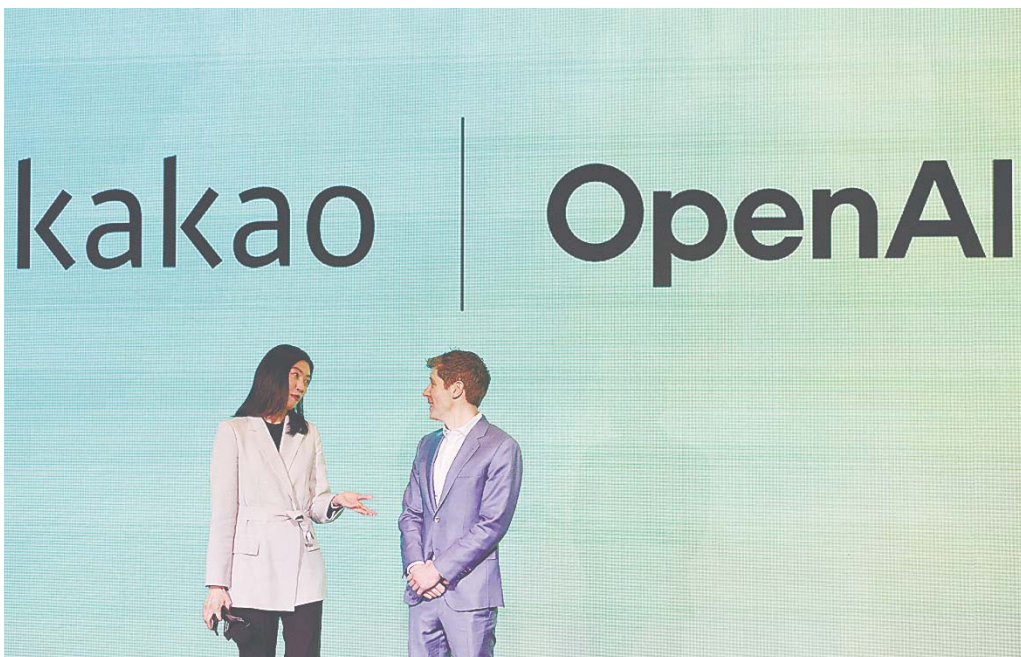
In a January note, CreditSights, Fitch Group's debt research firm, said if Danantara could efficiently and effectively consolidate SOEs, it would bring about better funding access and operational improvements as well as better access to global markets.

But it also warned the agency

could be susceptible to political interference.

"We see some risks upon the establishment of Danantara, including potential political influence on the utilisation of the fund, the integration process, and influence of Danantara on the strategic direction of the SOE, could affect investor confidence in the portfolio companies," it said, adding that Danantara was still seen as a modest credit positive event for the concerned SOEs.

Deputy speaker Dasco said the government's focus on creating a strong legal framework for Danantara should ease any investor worries. – Reuters



Chung and Altman posing for photographs during a press conference to announce the partnership in Seoul. – REUTERS/PIPC

OpenAI inks deal with Kakao after DeepSeek upset

SEOUL: OpenAI CEO Sam Altman inked a deal with tech giant Kakao in South Korea yesterday as the US firm seeks new alliances after Chinese rival DeepSeek shook the global AI industry.

Kakao, which owns an online bank, South Korea's largest taxi-hailing app and KakaoTalk, announced a partnership allowing them to use ChatGPT for its new artificial intelligence services, joining a global alliance led by OpenAI amid intensifying competition in the sector.

Altman's company is part of the Stargate drive announced by US President Donald Trump to invest up to US\$500 billion in AI infrastructure in the United States.

But AI newcomer DeepSeek has sent Silicon Valley into a frenzy, with some calling its high performance and supposed low cost a wake-up call for US developers.

"We're excited to bring advanced AI to

Kakao's millions of users and work together to integrate our technology into services that transform how Kakao's users communicate and connect," said Altman.

"Kakao has a deep understanding of how technology can enrich everyday lives."

Kakao's CEO Shina Chung said the company was "thrilled" to establish a "strategic collaboration" with OpenAI.

Also on Altman's agenda were meetings with two top South Korean chipmakers, Samsung and SK hynix, both key suppliers of advanced semiconductors used in AI servers.

Altman met with SK Group chairman Chey Tae-won and SK hynix CEO Kwak Noh-jung in Seoul to discuss collaboration on AI memory chips, including high bandwidth memory (HBM), and AI services.

Jaeyune Kim, executive vice-president of Samsung's memory business, said last week

that the company was "monitoring industry trends considering various scenarios" when asked about DeepSeek.

DeepSeek's performance has sparked a wave of accusations that it has reverse-engineered the capabilities of leading US technology, such as the AI powering ChatGPT.

OpenAI warned last week that Chinese companies are actively attempting to replicate its advanced AI models, prompting closer cooperation with US authorities.

OpenAI says rivals are using a process known as distillation in which developers creating smaller models learn from larger ones by copying their behaviour and decision-making patterns – similar to a student learning from a teacher.

The firm is itself facing multiple accusations of intellectual property violations, primarily related to the use of copyrighted materials in training its generative AI models. – AFP

Manila declares 'food security emergency'

MANILA: The Philippines, among the world's largest rice importers, declared a food security emergency to bring down the cost of rice, which it said has stayed elevated despite lower global prices and a reduction in rice tariffs last year.

The declaration, which was widely expected, will allow the government to release buffer stocks to help bring down retail prices of the national staple, Agriculture Secretary Francis Tiu Laurel said in a statement, adding it would remain in effect until the price situation improves.

Despite efforts to liberalise rice imports and reduce tariffs, the agriculture department said, the domestic market has been slow to respond, with retail prices surpassing expectations.

Half of the 300,000 metric tons buffer stock the National Food Authority currently holds could be released over the next six months to ensure supply for emergencies and disaster response, it added.

The annual rate of increase in rice prices in the Philippines hit a 15-year high of 24.4% in March last year, but has since moderated to 0.8% in December, helping keep overall inflation for 2024 within the government's 2% to 4% target.

Last year, the Philippines lowered tariffs on rice and extended existing tariff cuts on some other commodities to combat inflation and ensure ample supply. – Reuters

Turkish inflation slows to 42.1% in January

ANKARA: Annual inflation slowed in Türkiye in January for the eighth consecutive month, official figures showed on Monday.

Consumer prices rose by 42.1% year-on-year, compared with 44.3% a month earlier, figures from Türkiye's TÜIK statistics institute said.

Türkiye has experienced double-digit inflation since 2019, making life increasingly more expensive for millions of people, notably hitting the cost of education, housing, healthcare and restaurants and hotels.

The annual rate peaked at 75% in May before starting to ease from June.

On January 23, Türkiye's central bank lowered its key interest rate to 45% from 50% in December, saying its efforts to tame sky-high inflation were starting to pay off.

The official figures are disputed by the ENAG group of independent economists, which gave a January year-on-year estimate of 81%. – AFP

MARKET ROUND-UP: FEBRUARY 4

Bursa Trade Statistic

04 Feb 2025

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

Participation

Retail (19.60%)		Institution (38.44%)		Foreign (41.96%)	
Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)	
+28.13		-9.64		-18.49	
Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
416.79	388.66	785.18	794.82	853.07	871.57

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

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

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

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

Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	11,934.80 +68.77
FBMKLCI	1,564.39 +10.93
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	523.22 +1.12
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	164.50 +0.77
CONSTRUCTION	272.26 +2.82
FINANCIAL SERVICES	19,027.20 +187.40
ENERGY	813.39 -2.73
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	524.43 +5.51
HEALTH CARE	2,205.57 -10.50
TRANSPORTATION	1,048.28 +4.99
PROPERTY	1,049.38 +4.24
PLANTATION	7,373.08 +27.24
FBMSHA	11,754.70 +32.94
FBMACE	5,218.09 +28.92
TECHNOLOGY	57.93 +0.13

TURNOVER: 2.234 bil **VALUE: RM2.054 bil**

Bursa higher on bargain hunting in FBM KLCI stocks

BURSA Malaysia closed higher yesterday as bargain hunting continued in most index-linked counters, led by financial services, analysts said.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI gained 10.93 points, or 0.7%, to 1,564.56, compared with Monday's close of 1,553.63.

The benchmark index, which opened 3.4 points higher at 1,557.03, moved between 1,554.59 and 1,564.97 throughout the day.

On the broader market, gainers beat losers 544 versus 415, while 456 counters were unchanged, 889 untraded and 14 suspended.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors Sdn Bhd head of investment research, Mohd Sedek Jantan said although market sentiment was supported by US President Donald Trump's decision to delay the planned tariffs on Mexico and Canada, cautious sentiments remained due to lingering concerns over his trade policies, particularly his previous indication of potential tariffs on the European Union.

"On the technical front, we observe that the FBM KLCI is currently in the oversold territory following the recent sell-off. However, while yesterday's rebound was driven by bargain hunting, broader buying interest has yet to emerge as investors remain cautious about the possibility of further trade tariffs," he told Bernama.

Among the heavyweights, CIMB surged 19 sen to RM8.19, Public Bank and Maybank gained 8 sen each to RM4.40 and RM10.38, respectively, Sunway rose 10 sen to RM4.45 and Maxis improved 6 sen to RM4.91.

Harvest Miracle Capital remained the most active stock, rising by 1 sen to 19.5 sen. Oriental Kopi added 4.5 sen to 90 sen, MYEG gained 1.5 sen to 96 sen, and Natiogate was 8 sen better at RM1.85, while Velesto Energy shed 1 sen to 18.5 sen.

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-CWA1	0.160	0.040	33.33	1,398,961
HSI-PWBW	0.060	-0.045	-42.86	1,244,341
HM	0.195	0.010	5.41	634,563
KOPI	0.900	0.045	5.26	579,028
VELESTO	0.180	-0.010	-5.26	416,180
HSI-CWAW	0.310	0.090	40.91	409,825
HM-WD	0.085	0.005	6.25	384,271
MYEG	0.960	0.015	1.59	337,507
NATGATE	1.850	0.080	4.52	283,129
HSI-PWDA	0.060	-0.025	-29.41	274,398
SALCON-WB	0.030	0.020	200.00	260,237
SUPERMX	1.180	-0.040	-3.28	220,597
HSI-PWDK	0.185	-0.065	-26.00	214,605
HSI-PWB3	0.040	-0.030	-42.86	213,537
GAMUDA	4.180	0.040	0.97	207,046
CIMB	8.190	0.190	2.38	206,438
YTLPOWR	3.040	-0.010	-0.33	196,240
KAB	0.320	-0.005	-1.54	177,832
YTL	1.880	-	-	172,201
SET	0.340	-0.005	-1.45	168,041



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
HEIM	24.380	0.340	910
IHH	7.500	0.330	58,289
FBN	25.500	0.300	605
KLUANG	6.120	0.300	234
CIMB	8.190	0.190	206,438
SUNCON	3.680	0.180	53,063
HSI-CWCJ	0.735	0.150	30,549
MBMR	5.850	0.150	3,635
HSI-CWA7	0.525	0.120	6,590
HSI-CWCV	0.545	0.115	550
ITMAX	3.550	0.110	10,851
MCEMENT	4.770	0.110	2,409
CHINAETF-MYR	4.830	0.110	223
GESHEN	4.880	0.100	730
KOTRA	4.290	0.100	20
SUNWAY	4.450	0.100	45,701
BAT	7.300	0.090	1,781
FRONTKN	3.800	0.090	28,720
HSI-CWAS	0.190	0.090	150
HSI-CWAW	0.310	0.090	409,825

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
UNISEM-C39	0.085	750.00	860
SALCON-WB	0.030	200.00	260,237
CMSB-C51	0.010	100.00	3,279
FBMKLCI-CQ0	0.010	100.00	330
HSI-CWA2	0.050	100.00	2,070
KANGER-WB	0.010	100.00	31,353
NATGATE-CD	0.020	100.00	65,653
PBBANK-C1E	0.010	100.00	11,151
SUNCON-C24	0.020	100.00	30,781
HSI-CWAS	0.190	90.00	150
HM-WC	0.025	66.67	40,258
SUNCON-C19	0.025	66.67	8,301
HSI-CWAR	0.220	57.14	3,963
HSTECH-C18	0.185	54.17	10,870
YB	0.190	52.00	1,475
BURSA-CB4	0.015	50.00	1
D&O-C12	0.015	50.00	20,098
FBMKLCI-CQT	0.015	50.00	1,100
NATGATE-CF	0.015	50.00	110,047
OMESTI-WC	0.015	50.00	1,349

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	44,421.91	-122.75	-0.28
S&P 500 (US)	5,994.57	-45.96	-0.76
NASDAQ (US)	19,391.96	-235.48	-1.20
NYSE (US)	19,870.33	-128.49	-0.64
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	5,193.99	-23.92	-0.46
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,531.31	-52.25	-0.61
DAX (GER)	21,308.29	-119.95	-0.56
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	38,798.37	+278.28	+0.72
TOPIX (JPN)	2,738.02	+17.63	+0.65
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	20,789.96	+572.70	+2.83
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,817.08	-15.78	-0.41
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,250.60	-2.02	-0.06
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,481.69	+27.74	+1.13
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	179.96	-4.14	-2.25
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,373.98	-5.38	-0.06
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,633.43	+5.01	+0.06
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	78,178.25	+991.51	+1.28
FBM KLCI	1,564.56	+10.93	+0.70
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,823.57	-2.90	-0.08
WTI (US\$/BBL)	71.71	-1.45	-1.98
BRENT (US\$/BBL)	74.96	-1.00	-1.32
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,842.10	-15.00	-0.52
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	32.38	-0.15	-0.46
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	962.29	-5.44	-0.56
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	432.30	+1.75	+0.41
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,099.00	51.00	0.56
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	489.00	+0.25	+0.05
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	563.50	-3.25	-0.57
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	45.32	-1.19	-2.56
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	10,912.00	+57.00	+0.53
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	195.20	-1.90	-0.96

As at 5pm, Feb 4

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	88.220	-1.580	328
IGBB	2.310	-0.380	-
HSI-PWB3	0.575	-0.270	2,006
AYS	0.030	-0.255	144
TNLOGIS	0.435	-0.255	176
TOMYPAK	0.030	-0.255	695
ENGTEX	0.400	-0.195	100
BRIGHT	0.005	-0.180	13
FINTEC	0.005	-0.170	26,138
MICROLN	0.005	-0.165	3,690
HSI-PWBX	0.435	-0.155	1,300
FAREAST	3.450	-0.150	2
HSI-PWB1	0.335	-0.125	1,393
PANAMY	17.380	-0.120	41
HSTECH-H13	0.220	-0.105	239
HLFG	18.040	-0.100	1,559
HSI-PWDS	0.225	-0.095	14,876
PERSTM	2.280	-0.090	45
AEONCR	5.740	-0.080	4,376
HSI-PWDW	0.360	-0.075	3,130

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
BRIGHT	0.005	-97.30	13
FINTEC	0.005	-97.14	26,138
MICROLN	0.005	-97.06	3,690
AYS	0.030	-89.47	144
TOMYPAK	0.030	-89.47	695
HSI-PWB4	0.005	-80.00	20,934
HSI-PWBF	0.005	-66.67	506
JCY-C16	0.005	-66.67	400
CHEETAH-WA	0.005	-50.00	48,872
CYPARK-CF	0.015	-50.00	8,220
HSI-PWB1	0.010	-50.00	11,041
JTIASA-CW	0.005	-50.00	1,000
PHB	0.005	-50.00	18,263
PETGAS-C5	0.010	-50.00	532
RANHILL-CM	0.010	-50.00	12,000
SNS-CA	0.010	-50.00	1,000
TECHBND-WA	0.005	-50.00	33,948
YTLPOWR-C66	0.005	-50.00	2,800
FRONTKN-C34	0.020	-42.86	300
HSI-PWB3	0.040	-42.86	213,537

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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RM106.9m gross distribution for PMB Shariah Global Equity Fund

KUALA LUMPUR: PMB Investment Bhd (PIB) has declared an income distribution for PMB Shariah Global Equity Fund for the financial year ending Jan 31, 2025.

The fund declared an income distribution of 1 sen per unit, amounting to a total gross distribution of RM106,896.25.

This distribution has been credited to unitholders based on the ex-date of Jan 31, 2025, with the re-investment date set for Feb 1, 2025.

This distribution represents a yield of 1.8% for the financial year, with the fund generating a total return of 2.66% during the same period.

Highlighting the fund's strong performance, PIB chief investment officer Hang Tuah Amin Tajudin said with an impressive return of 23.75% over the three-year period ending Jan 31, 2025, the PMB Shariah Global Equity Fund has consistently delivered strong results.

"This reflects the fund's resilience and ability to navigate dynamic global market conditions effectively," he said.

The fund aims to achieve capital growth over the medium to long term by investing in a diversified portfolio of Shariah-compliant securities listed on global markets.

Under normal circumstances, the Fund allocates 70% to 99.5% of its net asset value to Shariah-compliant equities and equity-related securities, with the remainder invested in Islamic money market instruments, Islamic deposits, and other Shariah-compliant investments.

PMB Investment Bhd is an Islamic Fund Management Company that offers unit trust and fund management services. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Pelaburan Mara Bhd.

US tariffs deadline lifts ringgit at close

THE ringgit settled higher against the US dollar yesterday, as the rollback of the US tariffs deadline on Mexico and Canada lifted global growth sentiment, said an analyst.

At 6pm, the ringgit advanced to 4.4400/4495 against the greenback from Monday's close of 4.4710/4800.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid stated that the 30-day delay in implementing US import tariffs on Canada and Mexico was the primary factor affecting the currency market.

"It shows that there is room for negotiation for both parties to reach an amicable solution. However, the situation is still fluid given the surprise element.

"China has already responded with tariff hike on certain products related to agricultural tools and energy import from the US. As such, the currency market will likely remain volatile," he told Bernama.

Meanwhile, the ringgit mostly traded lower against other major currencies.

It strengthened against the Japanese yen to 2.8581/8645 from 2.8838/8898, fell against the euro to 4.5905/6003 from 4.5747/5839, and slipped against the British pound to 5.5167/5285 from 5.4966/5077.

The local note mostly traded higher against Asean currencies. It went down against the Singapore dollar to 3.2741/2813 from 3.2709/2777 but rose against the Thai baht to 13.1241/1580 from 13.1345/1687.

It was slightly stronger against the Indonesian rupiah to 271.5/272.2 from 271.7/272.5 and up against the Philippine peso to 7.61/7.63 from 7.62/7.64.

Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5155	4.3825	4.3725
1 Australian Dollar	2.8240	2.7100	2.6940
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3190	3.2220	3.2140
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1240	3.0410	3.0290
1 Euro	4.6680	4.5170	4.4970
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5510	2.4560	2.4400
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3190	3.2220	3.2140
1 Sterling Pound	5.6190	5.4410	5.4210
1 Swiss Franc	4.9860	4.7740	4.7590
100 UAE Dirham	124.3700	117.9800	117.7800
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.7660	3.5340	3.3340
100 Chinese Renminbi	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Danish Krone	64.1300	59.0300	58.8300
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.5600	55.6700	55.4700
100 Indian Rupee	5.2800	4.9600	4.7600
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0284	0.0257	0.0207
100 Japanese Yen	2.9100	2.8180	2.8080
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	40.8600	37.4500	37.2500
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6500	1.5400	1.3400
100 Philippine Peso	7.8300	7.3800	7.1800
100 Qatar Riyal	125.2500	118.9000	118.7000
100 Saudi Riyal	121.7400	115.5700	115.3700
100 South Africa Rand	24.9900	22.5600	22.3600
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5500	1.4200	1.2200
100 Swedish Krona	42.0000	38.2400	38.0400
100 Thai Baht	13.9300	12.3500	11.9500

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

Sunway REIT Outperform. Target price: RM2.07



Source: Kenanga Research

SUNREIT'S FY24 full-year core net profit came in at RM351.3 million, meeting the full-year consensus estimate at 100% but missed our full-year forecast by 7%. The difference was mainly due to a slightly lower-than-expected operating margin for Sunway Pyramid mall in the year. An estimated after-tax distribution of 4.9 sen was announced in the quarter, bringing the total NDPU to 9.2 sen, within our forecast of 9.1 sen.

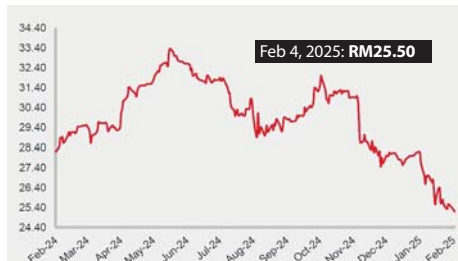
YoY, SUNREIT's FY24 revenue and net profit both increased by 7%, mainly driven by the inclusion of rental income from newly acquired assets such as six new hypermarkets in April 2024, and Sunway 163 mall in October 2024. This was further bolstered by stronger performance from Sunway Pyramid and Sunway Carnival post refurbishments.

QoQ, both revenue and net profit surged by 15%, largely attributable to the newly acquired Sunway 163 mall and higher rental income from Sunway Pyramid new wing – the Oasis.

Outlook. SUNREIT is set to fully recognise income from multiple new assets in FY25, being the six new hypermarkets, Sunway 163 mall and Sunway Kluang mall. We gathered that Sunway Pyramid's new wing – the Oasis which accounts for 11% of its NLA, has transformed into a lively and vibrant shopping space that is now attracting 40% higher footfalls. In addition, the progressive refurbishment works in Sunway Carnival that will be completed by mid FY25 will bring in even more offerings in the mall in Seberang Jaya and further boost SUNREIT's earnings. We remain confident that its hotel segment will continue to see revenue growth following government's higher budget allocation in promoting tourism. Downside risk remains to be the upcoming subsidy rationalisation in FY25.

OUTPERFORM with RM2.07 TP. – Kenanga Research, Feb 4

Fraser & Neave Holdings Bhd Outperform. Target price: RM34.40



Source: Kenanga Research

F&N'S Q1'25 core net profit, adjusted for forex, of RM152 million came in within expectations, at 25% of our full-year forecast and 26% of the full-year consensus estimate. As expected, no dividend was declared during this quarter. For the full financial year, we expect the group to declare a total dividend of 75 sen, implying a dividend payout ratio of 47%.

YoY, its Q1'25 revenue climbed 4% driven mainly by a 9% growth in F&B Thailand, supported by: (i) recovery in the Thai economy with increased tourist arrivals, and (ii) stronger Indochina sales from fresh milk supply restoration. Revenue from F&B Malaysia edged up 1% YoY due to early festive sell-in for Chinese New Year (CNY). EBIT increased by a sharper 17%, benefiting from better sales mix and lower input costs (favourable sugar prices, partially offset by higher palm oil costs).

However, core net profit fell 10% due to higher taxes following the tax incentive expiration for F&B Thailand since Q3'24 and withholding taxes on dividends repatriated from Thailand.

QoQ, its Q1'25 turnover rose 11% thanks to early festive demand in Malaysia, as well as sustained recovery in the Thailand and Indochina markets. Its core net profit surged 35% due to lower input costs and improved economies of scale.

Outlook: We believe F&N may continue to benefit from rising tourism in Malaysia and Thailand, especially with its ready-to-drink beverages. We also like its strategic focus on high-growth halal packaged food and dairy segments. The construction of the integrated dairy farm in Gemas remains on track and advancing steadily, though the delivery of first batch of livestock has been delayed since end-2024.

OUTPERFORM with RM34.40 TP. – Kenanga Research, Feb 4

AMMB Holdings Bhd Outperform. Target price: RM6.40



Source: Kenanga Research

THIS week, AMBANK announced that its proposed disposal of AmMetLife Insurance Bhd (AMLI) and AmMetLife Takaful Bhd (AMLT) to Great Eastern has been terminated. The deal which was announced in Oct 2023, would have otherwise entailed a RM1.12 billion consideration for AMBANK's entire 50% stake held in both AMLI and AMLT.

We opine that the previous intent for the disposal was for AMBANK to optimise its portfolio of underperforming business units to be reallocated into more accretive drivers. In FY23 and FY24, AMLI and AMLT collectively brought associate losses of RM10.5 million and RM12.6 million, respectively. Eliminating these losses on a group level would only result in less than 1% impact on earnings.

We opine that the group's FY29 strategic plan do not hinge on the additional capital which would have arisen from the disposal, as the group's initiatives appear to heavily rely on realignment of target groups i.e. to be more retail funded for more SME lending.

That said, we estimate the disposal would have been helpful to inject an additional 100 bps to its 15.3% CET-1 ratio and allow greater flexibility to pay special dividends. For now, we believe AMBANK would still be able to gradually increase its dividends organically, with our imputed 50% payout (from FY24's 40%) firmly supporting CET-1 at 14.7%. From our previous engagement, the group indicated its minimum threshold to be 14.0%, thus remaining at a comfortable range. Given the lack of earnings impact or immediate need for capital, we will not be surprised if AMBANK opts to maintain AMLI and AMLT operations within the group in the medium term.

OUTPERFORM with RM6.40 TP. – Kenanga Research, Feb 4



the Sun **LYFE**

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Food and beverage

Vietnamese supermodel shines in Paris

Minh Anh becomes haute couture glam doll - P22

INSIDE

p23 Cult fashion movies

p24 Malaysian takes wins at Mrs World pageant

p25 Grammys rundown

p26 *Game Changer* offers familiar fare



Vietnamese supermodel struts Paris Fashion Week

➤ Jessica Minh Anh radiates on French runway

V IETNAMESE supermodel Jessica Minh Anh made heads turn after strutting the Paris Fashion Week (PFW) Haute Couture runway, proving why the fashion producer remains a dominant force in the industry.

Transforming from a fierce warrior queen on Franck Sorbier's runway to an ethereal blonde goddess at Yui Nakazato and Peet Dullaert's shows, Minh Anh is one of the few Southeast Asian representatives on the runway.

Grand entrance in Sorbier's Barbarian Symphony

The anticipation was electric as Minh Anh descended the grand staircase at Sorbier's show, embodying strength and poise. Dressed in a dramatic black gown with a structured sleeveless top and flowing silk chiffon panels, she wielded a wooden staff adorned with teeth and claws, exuding raw power.

Makeup artist Everton Freire intensified her look with feathery lashes and extended eyeliner, while hairstylist Anne Arnold styled an edgy updo that framed her signature blunt fringe, adding a mystical aura. Her geometric wooden shoes added a modern contrast to the primal elements of her ensemble.

Minh Anh's commanding presence captured the essence of Sorbier's Barbarian Symphony collection, a tribute to the Women Wage Peace movement uniting Palestinian and Israeli women. Her deliberate movements and piercing gaze set the tone for a show that celebrated resilience and empowerment.

Front row vision at Nakazato's Fade collection

Minutes later, Minh Anh emerged transformed. The warrior was gone, replaced by an ethereal blonde goddess with voluminous, textured waves styled by Lucy Lassalle. The soft, cascading curls framed her face like a halo, balancing structure

and flow.

Sitting front row at Nakazato's show, she radiated elegance while continuing her long-standing support for Japanese fashion. Having fronted Yumi Katsura's bridal campaigns and walked her runways in Paris and New York, Minh Anh deeply appreciates Japanese craftsmanship.

"Nakazato's profound storytelling with the Fade collection transported us into a world where nature and urban landscapes smoothly intertwined. He masterfully pushes the boundaries of couture while staying deeply connected to emotion and transformation," she shared.

Captured by Sharon Sgroi and Sara Finezzo, Minh Anh's celestial presence lit up the front row, her golden waves glowing under the runway lights.

Closing PFW with grace at Dullaert

On the final day, Minh Anh embraced fluid elegance at Dullaert's presentation, wearing a black sculpted one-shoulder bodice paired with a flowing pastel pink



Minh Anh proves fashion is storytelling with every look.



Runway or front row, she does haute couture with ease.

skirt. Her youthful yet sophisticated look embodied the essence of Dullaert's V Symbol of the Sacred Feminine collection.

Hairstylist Alexandre de Paris styled her blonde waves into playful twin buns, adding a whimsical touch, while soft, doll-like makeup completed the ensemble. Statement brooches at the neckline and a high-slit skirt added glamour, blending ethereal charm with modern edge.

Minh Anh's elegance embodied Dullaert's philosophy of celebrating the body without claiming it.

Fashion trailblazer's next grand production

Beyond her striking runway moments, Minh Anh continues

redefining fashion with boundary-pushing productions. Her innovative catwalks merge fashion, technology and global landmarks, from the Eiffel Tower to the Grand

Canyon Skywalk. With another breathtaking spectacle on the horizon, Minh Anh proves couture is transformation, storytelling and impact.

She captivates in Dullaert's sculpted bodice and flowy pastel pink skirt.



Minh Anh in Sorbier's dramatic black gown and warrior staff.



With a playful pose and ginger locks, she radiates charm and beauty.



Her bold hairstyle and piercing gaze capture her magnetic presence.

BY VERONICA ELANKOVAN

FROM the romanticised streets of Paris to the busy city of KL, fashion has been a defining aspect of society. A visual display of the society's personality and colour, it is also an avenue for self-expression and retaliation.

However, as collateral of capitalism and greed, fashion has adopted a superficial and materialistic facade that we are familiar with today.

The industry is not without its vices — from substance abuse and exploitation to crimes, its darker, more demanding side has coexisted with the more glamorous, avant-garde anterior.

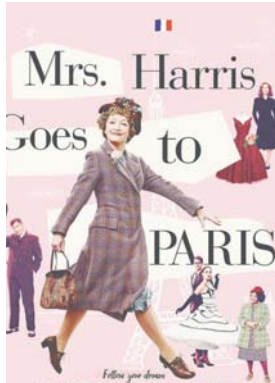
So, here are seven narrative works, picked by *theSun*, that have redefined the essence of this beautiful, enigmatic world.

The Devil Wears Prada (Netflix)

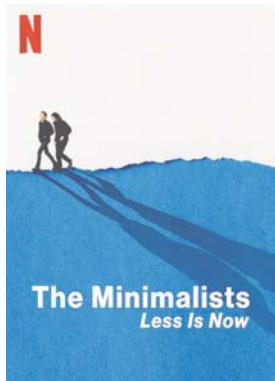
This movie is a rite of passage for fashion editors and media babes because, at some point, we all wanted to be Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep). Set in fashion city New York, the movie follows aspiring journalist Andrea Sachs (Anne Hathaway) and her journey towards self-discovery in the chaotic, conceited fashion world. The 2006 movie is based on a novel, released in 2003, by Lauren Weisberger. Rumour has it, Priestly's character was inspired by *Vogue's* editor-in-chief Anna Wintour.

Mrs Harris Goes To Paris (Netflix)

Another book-to-movie adaptation, the 2022 movie is a light-hearted comedy-drama about a widowed cleaning lady Mrs Ada Harris, who flies to Paris to buy a dress from *la maison* Dior. The heartwarming film sees Mrs Harris



Mrs Harris Goes to Paris.



The Minimalists: Less Is Now.



Cinematic couture

➤ Exploring sartorial scene through camera lens

embrace a new life by forging new relationships, including with herself, in the city of love in her authentic way.

The Minimalist: Less Is Now (Netflix)

The glitzy world of fashion can be frivolous and excessive, this 2021 documentary film focuses on two friends, Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus (aka Minimalists), who share insights on the benefits of minimalism. The documentary offers a fresh perspective, now embraced by the niche industry, on over-consumption, focusing on identity rather than material possessions.

Fashion (Netflix)

A breakout movie for Priyanka Chopra, the Hindi-language film is a bold commentary on the fashion industry that often exploits its models and crew. Meghna Mathur, played by Chopra, defies her

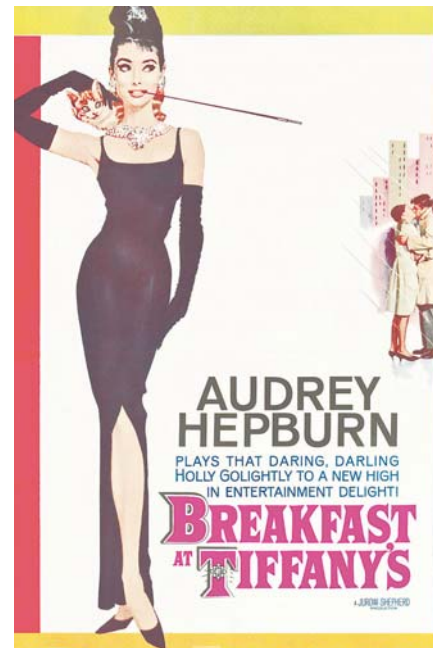


Fashion.

parents and moves to Mumbai to become a supermodel only to be met with the darker side of the industry, which involves substance abuse and exploitation.

Breakfast at Tiffany's (Apple TV)

The third book-to-movie adaptation in this list. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* may not be an archetypal fashion movie, but Audrey Hepburn's iconic looks as Holly



Breakfast at Tiffany's.



The Devil Wears Prada.

Phantom Thread.

Golightly are significant due to its influence on fashion and pop culture. From the opening black dress to the pink date night dress, Hepburn's looks were recreated recurrently in contemporary times. Opening with Golightly looking into the windows of Tiffany & Co, the movie embodies a romanticised, sophisticated New York through the fashion lens.

Phantom Thread (Apple TV)

Released in 2017, *Phantom Thread* is a gothic romance that follows the story of *haute couture* dressmaker Reynolds Woodcock (Daniel Day-Lewis), who takes on a young waitress Alma (Vicky Krieps) as his muse. An obsessive artist, the dismissal for Woodcock's predatory and controlling behaviour because of his "genius" mirrors the toxic power imbalance woven in the threads of beautiful gowns that exists between muses and designers.

The September Issue (Apple TV)

This documentary provides an intimate look at the life of *Vogue's* editor-in-chief Wintour as she orchestrates the production of the September 2007 issue, which is by far the largest one released. The documentary offers an inside scoop on the busiest times for



The September Issue.

fashion magazines as it captures rare behind-the-scenes perspective of the complicated and tedious process.

From whimsical journeys and iconic style intervals to unflinching critiques of excess and exploitation, these motion pictures reveal the multifaceted world of fashion, reminding us it is not just an industry — it is an evolving reflection of our culture, creativity and complexities.



Malaysian wins two Mrs World awards

➤ Selangor doctor clinches best costume, ambassador titles in pageant

MALAYSIA'S Dr Shalini Devi Ramachandran has clinched two awards at the Mrs World 2024 pageant held in Las Vegas. Representing the nation as Mrs Malaysia World 2024, Shalini won the prestigious Best Costume award and Mrs World Ambassador award at the event last Thursday.

She captivated the judges with her stunning national costume, aptly named "Puteri Membara Malaysia". A true showstopper, it featured an extraordinary 105-metre-long train, the longest ever created for a national costume, earning it a place in the Malaysian Book of Records.

Designed by Saran Anak Lagong from Sarawak, the vibrant red-and-black ensemble drew inspiration from Malaysia's rich cultural heritage. It beautifully incorporated intricate batik and songket

motifs, seamlessly blending traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design elements.

Shalini is also Mrs World Ambassador 2024. Expressing pride over this, Mrs Malaysia World Sdn Bhd national director Datin Harveen Kaur praised Shalini's international accomplishment.

Shalini, 37, a medical doctor from Selangor, runs a clinic with her husband Dr Yuveneswara Murti, also 37.

Meanwhile, the coveted Mrs World 2024 title was awarded to South African attorney Tshego Gaelae, with Sri Lanka's Ishadi Amanda named first runner-up and Thailand's Ploy Panperm securing second runner-up.

Founded in 1984, Mrs World is the first international beauty pageant dedicated exclusively to married women, celebrating beauty, grace and accomplishments beyond traditional pageantry. — Bernama



Shalini, 37, runs a clinic with her husband. — PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @DR.SHALZRC

Physically attractive people earn more, have better shot at top positions

KAHLIL Gibran wrote that "beauty is not in the face, beauty is a light in the heart." However, it is a safe bet that the Lebanese-American writer never had to confront the "beauty privilege," which brings many workplace advantages.

A recent American study highlights a striking link between physical attractiveness and professional success, particularly among young graduates.

Published in the journal *Information Systems Research*, this study asserts that being perceived as physically beautiful can have a lasting influence on career paths. MBA graduates who meet today's beauty standards not only earn higher salaries than their less attractive peers, it is also easier for them to attain prestigious positions.

To reach these conclusions, researchers at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Southern California studied data from over 43,000 MBA graduates, using advanced artificial intelligence and machine-learning tools. They were able to observe the evolution, over a 15-year period, of the link between physical appearance and professional success.

It turns out that, on average, graduates deemed attractive enjoy



A study claims being perceived as physically beautiful can have a lasting influence on career paths. — PEXELSPIC

a "beauty premium" of 2.4% on their annual earnings, which is around US\$2,500 (RM11,237) more than their less physically privileged peers. And for the top 10%, this bonus climbs to over US\$5,500 a year, generating considerable differences over the course of a career.

Beyond salary, the impact of appearance also influences career opportunities. Fifteen years after graduation, individuals perceived as attractive are 52% more likely to hold prestigious positions.

However, this advantage varies

from sector to sector. Professions involving a great deal of social interaction, such as consulting or management, place greater value on physical appearance, while its impact in technical fields, such as IT or engineering, are much less pronounced.

"This study shows how appearance shapes not just the start of a career, but its trajectory over decades. The findings reveal a persistent and compounding effect of beauty in professional settings, explains Nikhil Malik, lead author of

the study, in a statement.

Advantage with doubling impact

So what is at the root of this "beauty premium"? Psychologists attribute it to a phenomenon known as the "halo effect." Theorised by US psychologist Edward Thorndike, this effect describes a cognitive bias that influences our perception of a person on the basis of a single characteristic, whether positive or negative.

So, when a person is judged physically attractive, we tend to spontaneously attribute other positive qualities to them, such as intelligence or kindness, even in the absence of concrete evidence.

This mechanism can act like a self-fulfilling prophecy: a person who is considered beautiful attracts more positive attention, which in turn favours self-confidence, leadership skills and extroverted behaviour. All traits particularly valued in the professional sphere.

"It is a stark reminder that success is influenced not just by skills and qualifications, but also by societal perceptions of beauty," stresses study co-author Kannan Srinivasan in the same statement.

This "beauty premium" raises major ethical questions. While attractiveness may seem to offer advantages, it should not

overshadow the importance of competence. Especially as the benefits of beauty vary according to gender and age.

For example, men perceived as attractive often see their salaries rise rapidly, whereas for women, this effect manifests itself more gradually, as economist Eva Sierminska explained in a scientific article entitled *Does It Pay to be Beautiful?*

Furthermore, the appearance of individuals who are extremely beautiful is not always perceived positively in the professional sphere. This kind of physical appearance can raise concerns and provoke negative emotions in those who are less physically privileged, which can then become an obstacle to being hired and to career progression. There is also a danger of beauty being conceived of in cliché terms, such as associating beauty with a lack of intelligence.

In other words, even people considered very beautiful can be penalised by their appearance in the world of work.

This underscores the importance of companies reviewing their recruitment and talent management practices to ensure that looks never determine an employee's value. — ETX Studio

BY VERONICA ELANKOVAN

Grammy Awards highlights

FROM Kanye West and his wife Bianca Censori's controversial red carpet appearance to Beyoncé finally bagging Album of the Year, the 2025 Grammys is one for the books.

The winning of diverse artistes signify a shift in listening behaviours as the glass wall, built by music elitists, is shattered to allow the natural growth of music and the rise of musicians from different backgrounds.

So, in the event of the 67th Annual Grammy Awards that took place in Los Angeles, California earlier this week, here are some highlights to keep you updated.

Beyoncé's big win

Countless fans have voiced their discontent online over the diva being snubbed of the prestigious award multiple times.

Despite being the most decorated Grammy artiste, the refusal to recognise Beyoncé's impact in the music industry reflects Hollywood's discrimination of Black people, especially females, and the absence of minority representation.

So, it is only right the entire music fraternity followed in chorus as the *Texas Hold 'Em* singer accepted her first (hopefully, not last) Album of the Year award for her album *Cowboy Carter*. The win makes Beyoncé the fourth Black woman to have won the award after Natalie Cole (1992), Whitney Houston (1993) and Lauryn Hill (1999).

The now 35-time Grammy winner received the award from Taylor Swift, who also made a successful genre transition (country to pop). She also won Best Country Duo/Group Performance, an award she shares with Miley Cyrus.

Rise of female artistes

There are many female artistes in the industry, but rarely are they recognised for their artistry.

Reduced to a "sex symbol" or "crazy celebrity", as suffered by the likes of Lady Gaga, Britney Spears and Marilyn Monroe, female artistes were never allowed to flaunt their authentic, artistic self

Event's momentous moments

without being labelled.

Change is imminent and it is happening now as artistes such as Chappell Roan, Doechii, Sabrina Carpenter, Ariana Grande, Billie Eilish, Charli XCX, Shakira, Kacey Musgraves, Sza and more dominate the charts and nomination lists.

From the flirty *Short 'n Sweet* (Carpenter) to the confrontational *Alligator Bites Never Heal* (Doechii), comes an era of unapologetic female artistes who revolt against the male gaze and boldly take space.

Sociopolitical mission

The Grammys stage has always been a platform for artistes to relay their political beliefs and last Sunday night was not any different.

After an uncanny turnout of the US presidential election, the country faced political turmoil as the far-right wing uprooted significant policies after taking control of the office.

As such, to show comfort and support, many artistes acknowledged the current political climate in the US during their speeches.

For instance, Shakira promised



Doechii wins Best Rap Album, making her the third woman to win in the category. - PICS BY AFP



Carpenter wins Best Pop Vocal Album and Best Pop Solo Performance. - REUTERS/SPIC

camaraderie in the fight against the looming threat of deportation as US immigrants face an uncertain future. Lady Gaga and Roan expressed support for the LGBTQ community after the 47th President Donald Trump signed executive orders proclaiming the country will only recognise two genders.

Roan also took the time to demand labels and the industry to pay their new artistes a livable wage and health care.

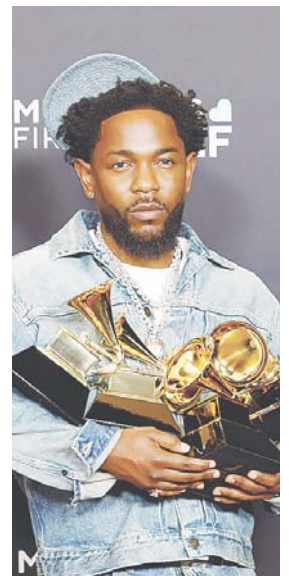
Kendrick Lamar's mic drop

The feud between Kendrick Lamar and Drake goes back many years when Drake was on everyone's top 10 artistes and Lamar was an emerging rapper.

The rappers went from featuring in both of their songs to writing diss tracks about each other—and that's when Lamar dropped his final blow *Not Like Us*, in which he called Drake a paedophile with a gabbling problem.

Winning five nominations (the Record of the Year, Song of the Year, Best Rap Performance, Best Rap Song and Best Music Video), the momentous night made him a 22-time Grammy winner.

Not long after *Not Like Us* dropped, Drake filed a defamation lawsuit against the Pulitzer laureate. Despite that, the diss track has since dominated music charts after debuting number one on the Billboard Hot 100 and now, winning almost every awards it is nominated for.



Lamar's *Not Like Us* picks up five awards.



Beyoncé wins Album of the Year.

With impactful performances such as a soulful Quincy Jones tribute, the event will be remembered for its representation that it has long eluded.

After many years of overlooking Black artistes' impact on music, the award show's move to give them their flowers now may have been performative but it was crucial for representation.



Game Changer treads familiar ground

► S. Shankar's latest flick is predictable, but visually stunning



Kiara (left) plays the female lead in the movie.
—PIC FROM IMDB

BY S.TAMARAI CHELVI

POPULAR Tamil film director S. Shankar's latest movie *Game Changer* is a political action movie that depicts the clash between a corrupt chief minister and a district collector in Andhra Pradesh.

However, the subject of the much-anticipated movie may be a little too familiar for Tamil audiences.

The movie opens with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Bobbili Satyamurthy suffering a heart attack and being rushed to the hospital. His power-hungry adopted sons, Bobbili Mopi Devi (Sj Suryah) and Bobbili Munimanickyam (Jayaram), are eagerly waiting to announce his death as they are eyeing his post.

Next, protagonist Ram Nandhan (Ram Charan), a policeman-turned-bureaucrat on his way to his posting at Vishakhapatnam, is introduced to viewers in a dramatic fight scene.

At his new office, Ram takes corrupt businessmen to task for violating rules. Later, there is a flashback involving his former girlfriend Deepika (Kiara Advani), whom he has not talked to for years.

In the second half of the movie, Satyamurthy dies and, in his will (a video recording), appoints Ram as the next chief minister, surprising everyone, including his own sons.

In a flashback, Ram's biological father, a villager named Subbanna (also known as Appanna), is shown forming a political party committed to "no money politics."

But due to Subbanna's stuttering, Satyamurthy speaks on the former's behalf and becomes the candidate for chief minister instead.

Subsequently, Subbanna is betrayed and murdered while his wife and young son escape.

Back to the present, Mopi uses "politricks" (politics and tricks) to steal Ram's chief minister post.

Ram instead is made chief electoral officer for the state election and uses his in-depth knowledge of rules and regulations to try to disqualify the two brothers from standing for election.

Positives

The best performances came from both Ram and Surya.

The former effortlessly tackled action, comedy and dancing scenes, showcasing his versatility. But what will be memorable to viewers is his acting as village leader Subbanna, who struggles to speak without stuttering.

Ram's portrayal of the character's pain,



Ram in the set for the song *Jaragandi*.

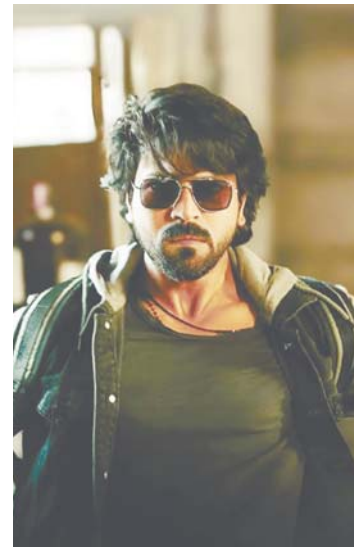
struggle and embarrassment was deeply moving – it was his best performance in the movie by far.

Suryah impressed as Mopi, a power-crazy, greedy politician who will stop at nothing to achieve his goals. His dialogue delivery livened up the second half of the movie.

Jayaram also did a good job. Playing a selfish, corrupt politician who constantly

makes sarcastic remarks, his comedic skills were absolutely on point for the role.

Anjali gave a noteworthy performance as Parvathy, Subbanna's wife and Ram's mother. Srikanth did well as the guilt-conscious chief minister Satyamurthy. Kiara, as Ram's love interest Deepika, delighted in a brief appearance, but Samuthirakanni's role was just too small for his talent.



Ram as the younger version of his character.
—PICS FROM PINTEREST

Grand production

Music composer S. Thaman's songs were riveting, the cinematography and visuals were stunning.

Apart from the picturesque backdrop, the enormous sets for the song *Dhop* and dancers from various cultures for the song *Raa Macha Raa* were just splendid.

The song *Lyraanna* did not make the final cut, but it was eventually included in the movie on Pongal this year due to demand from fans.

Disappointments

Given the director's numerous hits, perhaps expectations were just too high.

The story is a bit of a letdown. The plot of an ordinary man confronting corrupt ministers is quite similar to that of Shankar's previous movies such as *Mudhalvan*, *Gentleman* and *Indian*.

Furthermore, the flow of the story is somewhat disjointed with constant scene jumps. The first half of the movie felt too rushed.

The movie also made room for too many comedic characters.

Comedic actors Sunil, Vennela Kishore and Brahmanandam could have been cut out without the movie losing much. We felt only Jayaram's comedy seems relevant to the storyline.

The actors should have spoken in Tamil rather than Telugu with a Tamil dub. Besides that, the ending is predictable.

Ultimately entertaining

The best thing about the movie was it highlighted the powers of a district collector and chief electoral officer that are often overlooked.

Audiences will walk away thinking about the neglect of law by those in power, while also being mesmerised by the high-quality production.

The grand visuals, thrilling action scenes involving Ram and emotional performances are all reasons to watch this film, despite its shortcomings.



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'Sinner has edge'

Alcaraz says Italian is best player in the world now

CARLOS ALCARAZ said he has no doubt that top-ranked Jannik Sinner is the best player in the world on current form as the two young players continue to lay the foundations for an epic rivalry.

Alcaraz, the 21-year-old world No. 3, won the French Open and Wimbledon titles last year, splitting the four Grand Slam tournaments with 23-year-old Sinner.

The Spaniard also improved his head-to-head record with the Italian to 6-4, beating Sinner three times in as many meetings.

Sinner, meanwhile, won 73 of his 79 matches last year including the US Open and the Australian Open, which he successfully defended at Melbourne Park last month.

"Jannik is the best right now," Alcaraz told reporters in Rotterdam. "He has lost only four or five matches in the past year, so it's crazy."

"I know people say who's better out of us. They say Jannik is better

or some say me. It's all discussion.

"But for me, I think for a tennis player, we have to face Jannik and he's winning everything.

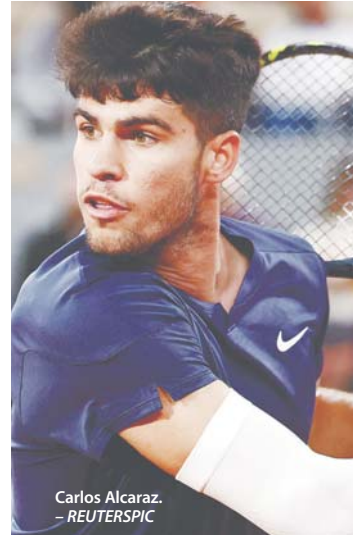
"He's focused every time, so I think he's the best. Every tournament he plays, he makes the final or lifts the trophy."

Alcaraz returns to action in Rotterdam after his quarterfinal loss to 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open ended his bid to become the youngest player to capture all four major titles.

"I don't feel that it was a missed opportunity against Novak," added Alcaraz, who won the US Open in 2022.

"I really wanted to win the tournament and felt I was able to, but Novak played an unbelievable match. Facing Novak in the quarterfinals at a Grand Slam is the worst thing.

"It was a pretty good match. I've tried to take the good things about that match and will look ahead now." - Reuters



Carlos Alcaraz. - REUTERS/SPIC

Australia closer to greatness: Lyon



Nathan Lyon. - REUTERS/SPIC

AUSTRALIA are not yet a great team but completing a series sweep in Sri Lanka would push them closer, according to spin bowler Nathan Lyon.

Australia won the first Test by an innings and 242 runs in Galle and will look to wrap up the series 2-0 with another win at the same venue when the second Test starts tomorrow.

The world's top-ranked Test nation and reigning World Test Championship holders, Australia have won 10 out of their last 13 Tests since drawing the 2023 Ashes in England.

On their last tour of Sri Lanka, Australia gave up a 1-0 lead to split the two-match series with the hosts, who rebounded with an innings and 39-run win in the second test in Galle.

Lyon said there was plenty of motivation in the Australian camp to avoid a repeat of that let-down.

"It's about us on our journey to becoming a great team, to make sure we go 2-0 up," he told reporters.

"We're on that journey, we're not there yet but that's our end goal.

"We want to be known as a great team, and part of that journey is when we close a window making sure we nail it shut, and we don't let anyone back in."

Australia's success has been compared with some of the nation's great test teams led by Steve Waugh and Ricky Ponting.

Asked what would elevate the current group into greatness, Lyon said Australia still needed series wins in India and England.

Australia were held to 2-2 draws on their last two Ashes tours of England and have not beaten India away since Adam Gilchrist's team took a 2-1 series win in 2004. - Reuters

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322 Notices

G MOTION (PENANG) SDN. BHD.
Registration No.: 202001022005 (1378325-D) (Incorporated in Malaysia)

Members' Voluntary Winding Up

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING UNDER SECTION 459(1) OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016

Notice is hereby given that the Final General Meeting of the members of the company will be held at 19, Jalan Anggerik, Tainia 31/121, 40460 Shah Alam, Selangor on 7th March, 2025 at 10.00 am for the purpose of receiving the accounts and reports of the Liquidator in relation to the winding up of the Company in pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act, 2016 the books and papers of the company and or subsequent to the commencement of the company be destroyed accordingly.

CHOONG MUN PHIN (F) Liquidator
Date: 5th February, 2025

IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT KUALA LUMPUR
IN THE STATE OF FEDERAL TERRITORY OF KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA COMPANIES (WINDING UP) PETITION NO: WA-28NCC-1000-10/2024

In the matter of Section 465(1)(e) and Section 466(1) (a) of the Companies Act, 2016 (Act 777);

And

In the matter of Alphacreation Construction Sdn. Bhd. (Company No: 202101026804 [1427104 -D])

Between

NORTHERN REALTY SDN BHD (Company No. 202301030472 [1524395-U]) ...PETITIONER

And

ALPHACREATION CONSTRUCTION SDN. BHD. (Company No. 202101026804 [1427104 -D]) ...RESPONDENT

NOTICE OF WINDING-UP ORDER

In the matter of Alphacreation Construction Sdn. Bhd. (Company No: 202101026804 [1427104 -D]).

Winding-Up Order made this 16th day of January 2025.

Name and address of liquidator:-

Jabatan Insolvency Malaysia, Cawangan Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, 22, 23, 24 & 25, Menara TH Perdana 1001, Jalan Sultan Ismail, 50250 Kuala Lumpur.

Signed Solicitors for the Petitioner Messrs Y L Chong & Associates Suite 208, 2nd Floor, Block E Phileo Damansara I No. 9, Jalan 16/11 46350 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan. Tel: 03-76650383; Fax: 03-76650382. (Our Ref: CYL/8442/NR/AC/24)

THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT KUALA LUMPUR
IN THE STATE OF WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN KUALA LUMPUR (COMMERCIAL DIVISION) COMPANIES (WINDING-UP) NO. WA-28NCC-16-01/2025

In the matter of S.465 (1) (e) and S. 466 (1) (a) of the Companies Act, 2016;

AND

In the matter of the Companies (Winding-Up) Rules, 1972;

AND

In the matter of Warisan Maju Bintang Sdn Bhd (Company No. 201301024339[1054168-X])

POPULAR PILLAR SDN BHD (Company No. 201601000146 [1171071-X]) ... PETITIONER

AND

WARISAN MAJU BINTANG SDN BHD (Company No. 201301024339 [1054168-X]) ...RESPONDENT

ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION

Notice is hereby given that a Petition for the Winding-Up of the abovesaid Respondent Company by the High Court, was on the 6th day of January 2025 presented by Popular Pillar Sdn Bhd (Company No. 201301024339[1054168-X]) and that the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Court sitting at Kuala Lumpur, at 9.00 o'clock in the forenoon on the 8th day of May 2025 via video conferencing; and any creditor or contributory of the said Company desiring to support or oppose the making of an Order on the said Petition may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his Counsel for that purpose; and a copy of the said Petition will be furnished to any creditor or contributory of the said Company requiring the same by the undersigned on payment of regulated charge for the same.

The Petitioner's address is No. 242, Kampung Baru Jln, 45620 Batang Berjaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

The Petitioner's solicitors are Messrs Azlan M K Thas & Co, 19-1, Jalan Tiara 28, Bandar Baru Klang, 41150 Klang, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

signed Messrs Azlan M K Thas & Co Solicitors for the Petitioner

Note:-

Any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the said Petition must serve on or send by post to the abovesaid solicitors Messrs Azlan M K Thas & Co, notice in writing of his intention to do so. The Notice must state the name and address of the person, or if a firm, the name and address of the firm, and must be signed by the person or firm, or his or her solicitors (if any) and must be served, or if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the abovesaid not later than twelve o'clock noon on the 7th day of May 2025 (the day before the day appointed for the hearing of the Petition).

Tel No: 03-2341 5322 Fax No: 03-23415332, Email: azlanmkthas@mgmail.com (Ref: ANKAL76507-24/NI-1M2)

322 Notices

IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT SHAH ALAM
IN THE STATE OF SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN, MALAYSIA (COMMERCIAL DIVISION) COMPANIES (WINDING-UP) NO. BA-28NCC-47-01/2025

In the matter of Section 465(1)(e) & (f) and 466(1)(a) of the Companies Act 2016;

And

In the matter of MAXBILL ALLIANCE SDN. BHD. (200801001609 [802893-W]);

BETWEEN

THE ATMOSPHERE JMB (Registration No: MBS.L.CO.BP.6-40) ... PETITIONER

AND

MAXBILL ALLIANCE SDN. BHD. (Company No.: 200801001609 [802893-W]) ... RESPONDENT

ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION

NOTICE is hereby given that a Petition for the Winding-Up of the abovesaid Respondent Company by the High Court was, on the 20th day of January, 2025 presented by The Atmosphere JMB of Block C, Ground Floor, Jalan Atmosphere 5, Pusat Perumahan Atmosphere, Bandar Putra Permai, 43300 Seri Kembangan, Selangor Darul Ehsan, and that the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Court sitting at Shah Alam at 9.00 o'clock in the forenoon, on the 22nd day of April 2025; and any creditor or contributory of the said Respondent Company desiring to support or oppose the making of an Order on the said Petition may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his Counsel for that purpose; and a copy of the Petition will be furnished to any creditor or contributory of the said Respondent Company requiring the same by the undersigned on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

The Petitioner's address is Block C, Ground Floor, Jalan Atmosphere 5, Pusat Perumahan Atmosphere, Bandar Putra Permai, 43300 Seri Kembangan, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

The Petitioner's solicitors are Messrs David & Paulian of 8-11-06, Gateway Corporate Suites, Gateway Kiaraamas, No.1, Jalan Desa Kiara, Mont Kiara, 50480 Kuala Lumpur.

DAVID & PAULIAN
Solicitors for the Petitioner

NOTE:-

Any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the said Petition must serve on or send by post to the abovesaid David & Paulian, notice in writing of his intention to do so. The Notice must state the name and address of the person, or if a firm, the name and address of the firm, and must be signed by the person or firm, or his or her solicitors (if any) and must be served, or if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the abovesaid not later than twelve o'clock noon of the 21st day of April 2025 (the day before the day appointed for the hearing of the Petition).

SEAMLESS JOURNEY WITH JOJO FLIGHT

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McLaren out to 'make life difficult' for Hamilton

McLAREN team principal Andrea Stella plans to "make life difficult" for Lewis Hamilton and Ferrari in 2025, despite admitting that the seven-time world champion's unveiling as a Prancing Horse driver "excited him" as a fan.

Hamilton is undergoing a rigorous pre-season testing and preparation programme ahead of his debut season with the Italian constructor.

The Brit arrived in Maranello to much fanfare in mid-January and has completed track sessions in Fiorano and the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya.

"To be honest, as a fan of Formula One, by having been 15 years at Ferrari before, I felt excited myself to see something that is historic for Formula One: seven-times World Champion going to Ferrari, one of the most iconic teams," Stella told *Sky Sports F1*.

"I think Ferrari and Hamilton handled this very well, but ultimately, I'm sure they know very well that what counts is what's happening on track.

"So after the initial excitement, I'm sure they will focus on making sure that the preparation

is good."

Despite his admiration for Ferrari and Hamilton, Stella plans to cause the Italian constructor some pain in 2025. "On our side, we will try and make life a little bit difficult," he pledged.

"We're going into next year at full strength," McLaren Racing CEO Zak Brown told *Motorsport.com*: "I think we're in a different mindset now in terms of the confidence of the team and the amount of bravery that the team is

prepared to take in the development in next year's car.

"The team is not (saying): 'Let's just tweak a little here and there. The car is pretty good.' We've got some stuff on next year's car that is (a) 'brave risk'.

"I think you only get to the front if you try and beat everyone, as opposed to the mindset when we started this year, which was like: 'Let's just be as good as them.' The mind shift is now: 'Let's beat everyone.'" – Express Newspapers

SHORTS

Hoffman implores pros to play faster

CHARLEY HOFFMAN wrote a letter to his fellow PGA Tour players addressing slow pace of play and other issues within the ranks.

The letter, shared on social media by *Golf Magazine* on Monday, follows the lead of Justin Thomas, whose memo last month implored golfers to be more accommodating to the sport's broadcast partners as a means to connect with the fans and improve television viewership.

"We've taken a lot of heat over the past few weeks about slow play," Hoffman wrote. "And yeah, it's an issue for our fans, for us as players-cutting down field sizes will help, but only by a few minutes a day.

"As players, we still need to make a concerted effort to speed up. Pace of play has been a challenge my entire 20 years on Tour, and it was an issue 20 years before that.

"Golf is a tough game, and when conditions get extreme, it takes time to play it the right way.

"We all need to take responsibility to be ready when it's our turn to play and having the awareness to realise that we are out of position and speed up even before the rules official shows up. We do it all the time, we just need to be more aware of it!"

Injured Mickelson to miss LIV opener

PHIL MICKELSON suffered a minor shoulder injury during a workout in the gym and will miss the LIV Golf season opener in Saudi Arabia this week.

Mickelson, 54, made the announcement yesterday on social media.

Ollie Schniederjans will replace Mickelson in the LIV field this week, joining the captain's HyFlyers team at LIV Golf Riyadh beginning tomorrow. The HyFlyers are still looking for their first team victory.

Mickelson said he expects to compete next weekend at LIV Golf Adelaide at The Grange Golf Club in Australia.

"I'm definitely disappointed that I will miss the season opener, but I look forward to playing in Adelaide," he said.

Schniederjans, a 31-year-old who grew up in Georgia, narrowly missed earning a full LIV card at the LIV Golf Promotions event late last year but gained the right to play in the 10 events in The International Series in 2025.

He capitalised on that Sunday, winning The International Series India by four strokes over US Open champion and LIV star Bryson DeChambeau. Another stroke back in third place sat a pair of LIV players, Joaquin Niemann and Abraham Ancer.

Max told to ditch Red Bull

Former Haas team principal sends RM5.5b advice to world champ

FORMER Haas team principal Guenther Steiner has advised Max Verstappen to take up Aston Martin on their reported £1 billion (RM5.5b) contract offer, "even if he finishes last" every race weekend.

The Dutchman is tied to Red Bull long-term but is in demand after four successive Drivers' Championship titles.

Verstappen does have avenues through which he can exit his current contract if the Milton Keynes squad fails to give him a car that can challenge for more silverware.

Among Verstappen's headline suitors are Mercedes and Aston Martin.

Toto Wolff was far from subtle in his public courting of the 27-year-old last year, but with Kimi Antonelli and George Russell signed up for 2025, the Silver Arrows have two homegrown talents he'll be keen to nurture moving forward.

Aston Martin's interest is more intriguing. Owner Lawrence Stroll has demonstrated boundless ambition since rebranding the team from Racing Point and has already secured the services of Red Bull's aerodynamics guru, Adrian Newey, in 2024 at a significant financial cost.

The Silverstone-based squad have since been linked with a remarkable £1 billion move for Verstappen.

Aston Martin have denied these reports, but interest in the four-time world champion would be understandable, given Fernando Alonso's age and Lance Stroll's inconsistent performances.

Discussing the move, former Haas boss Steiner told *GPBlog*: "A billion is a big number. Even if Max finishes last, he should go for a billion.

"Some of them (teams) cannot afford him, obviously, Aston Martin can afford him.

"The billion... it's a little bit putting it high because, that would set the record, which will never be broken again. That's a bit fictional, but I'm sure Aston Martin will pay a good amount of



Max Verstappen. – REUTERS/SPIC

money for it." While Verstappen's move to Aston Martin would be a no-brainer on financial terms, Steiner was unsure who would move aside for the Dutchman.

"I don't think Fernando will go, and I don't think they will replace Lance," he continued. "It's like maybe 2027. But again, there is no guarantee for Max that Aston Martin will be good."

If Aston Martin are to lure Verstappen to Silverstone, they will need to demonstrate to the four-time world champion that they can produce a car capable of fighting for more Drivers' Championship titles.

Team principal Mike

Krack was removed from his role after a miserable 2024 season, and Verstappen will no doubt be concerned about the team's worrying development trajectory last term.

In related news, Red Bull advisor Helmut Marko revealed that his continued involvement in Formula 1 is largely due to his close relationship with Verstappen.

"I have never felt so close to a driver, I admit it straight away. The first time I had a serious conversation with Max, he was 13 years old.

"Normally I talk to a young driver for 10-15 minutes. With Max it lasted more than an hour," revealed Marko of his connection to 27-year-old Verstappen.

In a recent interview with the Dutch magazine *Formule1*, 81-year-old Marko also emphasised his commitment to preserving the legacy of Red Bull's late founder, Dietrich Mateschitz.

"I still do this job for two reasons: one is Max and the other is to preserve the spirit of Red Bull and Dietrich Mateschitz in the team.

"At least that's what I try to do, because there is no one who can really replace Didi." – Express Newspapers/Agencies



Guenther Steiner. – REUTERS/SPIC

Las Vegas' Formula 1 race moving to primetime

THE Las Vegas Grand Prix will get a more reasonable start time this November, though it will remain at night under the lights of the Strip.

Previously starting at 10pm local time – which meant 1 am Eastern time and the wee hours of the morning over in Europe – the race will move up two hours to 8pm local time this season.

The news was revealed when start times for all 24 stages of the 2025 Formula 1 World Championship were published yesterday.

Las Vegas was added to the F1 schedule in 2023, the third US-based race following the United States Grand Prix at Circuit of the Americas and the Miami Grand Prix.

While most F1 races are run on Sunday afternoons, the Las Vegas Grand Prix remains the only one slated for a Saturday night.

"This adjustment is based on feedback, insights and experience from the first two races, expanding opportunities for fans to explore the destination and continuing to engage with more fans across the US," a Las Vegas Grand Prix spokesperson told *f1.com*.

After a 41-year absence, Formula 1 made a grand return to Las Vegas in 2023 with an ultraglitzy, high-speed circuit woven through the heart of the city.

Unlike the original Caesars Palace Grand Prix

from the 1980s, which was staged in a casino parking lot, the modern Las Vegas GP was designed as a blockbuster event, with Formula 1 itself heavily investing in its production and promotion.

Despite concerns over cold temperatures and logistical hiccups in its debut year, the race delivered thrilling action and a vibrant atmosphere, solidifying its status as a permanent fixture on the F1 calendar.

The Las Vegas Grand Prix will be the third-to-last race again in 2025, held on Nov. 22. George Russell of Mercedes won the 2024 event. – Field Level Media/Agencies

PSG biggest movers

Big-money transfers few and far between on continental Europe

BIG-MONEY transfers were few and far between on continental Europe during the January transfer window, as clubs in Spain, Germany, Italy and France had a quiet month with only a few exceptions. Here's a round up of some of the key moves:

All quiet in Spain

Spanish clubs do not tend to splash their cash in the winter transfer windows and this season's was even quieter than usual.

Real Betis loaned Manchester United winger Antony until the end of the season, with the Brazilian aiming to reignite his career in Seville after it stagnated at Old Trafford.

Elsewhere, former Barcelona midfielder Arthur moved on loan to Girona from Juventus, also hoping to find form back in Catalonia, and Liverpool youngster Stefan Bajcetic headed to Las Palmas also on a temporary basis.

Leipzig tie down Simons

The Bundesliga's incoming winter transfer window was quiet too, with the notable exception of RB Leipzig, who smashed their transfer record to make Xavi Simons' loan from Paris Saint-Germain permanent for €50 million (RM225m).

Bayern Munich's main deadline-day news was goalkeeper Manuel Neuer's one-year extension, with their reported pursuit of Chelsea winger Christopher Nkunku falling through.

Reluctant to lose wantaway forward

Mathys Tel, the German giants sent the young Frenchman to Tottenham Hotspur on a six-month loan. Eintracht Frankfurt brought in Elye Wahi from Marseille for €25 million (RM112.5m) to replace Omar Marmoush, now with Manchester City.

Defending champions Bayer Leverkusen reacted to their injury woes by bringing in Aston Villa's Emi Buendia and Mario Hermoso from Roma, both on six-month loan deals.

Struggling Borussia Dortmund, who sit 11th in the Bundesliga table, brought in Chelsea midfielder Carney Chukwuemeka on a loan deal and signed Sweden left-back Daniel Svensson, but a deadline day move for Lyon's Rayan Cherki collapsed.

Milan, Juve make moves in Italy

In Italy, AC Milan and Juventus reacted to poor starts to the season by making swoops in the January window.

Milan, well off the pace at the top of the table in Serie A, allowed Spain's Euro 2024-winning skipper Alvaro Morata to join Galatasaray on loan, and spent big to sign a replacement in the shape of Mexico forward

Santiago Gimenez from Feyenoord.

England right-back Kyle Walker, a loan signing



from Manchester City has also headed to Milan. Meanwhile Juve moved to address their problems in attack with the signing of France forward Randal Kolo Muani on loan until the end of the season from PSG, where he had fallen out of favour. Kolo Muani has already scored three goals in two games since moving to Turin.

Another notable move saw struggling Como sign England international midfielder Dele Alli, who had been without a club since leaving Everton at the end of last season.

PSG sign Kvaratskhelia

PSG, unsurprisingly, made the single biggest splash in France with the signing of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia from Napoli for a reported €70 million (RM315m).

The recruitment of the thrilling Georgian winger will further strengthen the PSG attack heading into the Champions League knockout phase.

However, the busiest club in Ligue 1 has been struggling Rennes, who have spent big in an attempt to pull clear of the relegation zone.

Yesterday's six signings, including Jordanian forward Musa al-Tamari from Montpellier, brought their total outlay to close to €70 million, with other signings including Ivory Coast midfielder Seko Fofana from Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia and France international goalkeeper Brice Samba from Lens.

Moving away from Rennes was Amine Gouiri, the Algerian international forward who has joined Marseille as a replacement for Wahi.

Roberto De Zerbi's Marseille also signed Algerian midfielder Ismael Bennacer from AC Milan on loan with an option to buy as they bid to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Meanwhile Lyon have been hit with a transfer ban as they fight huge debts, but were allowed to sign Argentina playmaker Thiago Almada on loan from Brazilian champions Botafogo, who have the same owner in John Textor. - AFP

SIDENETTING

Lazio move up to fourth

LAZIO climbed back into the Serie A top four yesterday above Juventus with a 2-1 victory at Cagliari sealed by Taty Castellanos' second-half goal. The capital club bounced back from the previous weekend's home loss to Fiorentina to move two points above fifth-placed Juve. Fiorentina are one further point behind, with Bologna five points adrift of Lazio in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League. Mattia Zaccagni put Lazio ahead four minutes before halftime after Boulaye Dia earlier had a goal ruled out by VAR for handball. Roberto Piccoli headed in from a corner to level for Cagliari early in the second half, but Taty Castellanos secured a deserved win for the visitors. Napoli lead champions Inter Milan, who have a game in hand, by three points at the top of the table after the two title rivals were held to draws by Roma and AC Milan respectively on Sunday.

Black Cats boost promotion hopes

SUNDERLAND beat local rivals Middlesbrough 3-2 in yesterday's thriller to move to within three points of the Championship's automatic promotion places. Ryan Giles' unfortunate own goal settled the Tees-Wear derby in favour of the visitors and dealt a blow to Boro's push for the playoffs. Delano Burgzorg gave the home side the perfect start after 11 minutes with cool finish from Hayden Hackney's pass. Dan Neil's deflected equaliser levelled before half-time for Sunderland, who then went in front Wilson Isidor rounded Mark Travers to slot home. Hackney responded once more for Michael Carrick's men with a blistering strike on the hour mark. But Sunderland secured their first league double over Middlesbrough in 63 years when Giles turned Enzo Le Fee's cross into his own net. The Black Cats remain in fourth but move level on points with third-placed Burnley and within striking distance of Sheffield United in second. Defeat leaves seventh-placed Boro still outside the playoffs on goal difference.

Real blast 'rigged' refereeing after shock loss

REAL MADRID yesterday blasted refereeing in Spain as "rigged" and "completely discredited" following the club's shock 1-0 defeat at struggling Espanyol over the weekend.

The Spanish giants were left furious after Espanyol defender Carlos Romero was not shown a red card for his reckless tackle on Kylian Mbappe in the 61st minute of Sunday's game.

Romero was only booked for a cynical foul and went on to net the winner, which left Real Madrid leading La Liga by a single point.

"The events of the match exceeded any margin for human error or refereeing interpretation," the secretary of Real's board of directors, Jose Luis del Valle Perez, wrote in a letter to Spain's football federation (RFEF) which the club posted online.

"What happened at the RCDE Stadium

represents the peak of a completely discredited refereeing system, in which decisions against Real Madrid have reached a level of manipulation and alteration of the competition that cannot be ignored," he added.

In addition to Romero being spared a red card, a goal by Vinicius Junior was disallowed after Mbappe was adjudged to have fouled his marker.

"Given the seriousness of the facts, Real Madrid demand that the RFEF immediately hand over the VAR audios relating to these two key actions in the match," the club said.

Real Madrid called for a "complete" reform of the refereeing system in Spain, accusing it of being "completely rigged and structurally built to protect itself".

"When those who should be the object of supervision and control are, at the same time, a decisive factor in the choice of those who should carry out this task of supervision, we end up with what we are currently experiencing," the club said, adding the system "has proved to be corrupt from within".

Real coach Carlo Ancelotti criticised the decision not to send off Roemero after the match, saying "it was a clear foul, a very ugly tackle".

"The decision the referee and the VAR took is inexplicable. Everyone saw it. The most important thing is to protect the player. It's a clear foul, a very ugly challenge."

"Fortunately, nothing happened in terms of an injury, but the VAR is there for that. It's inexplicable to us that he didn't show a red card." - AFP/Agencies

Neymar homecoming is a reminder of promise unfulfilled

WHEN Neymar left Brazil aged 21 in 2013, bound for Barcelona, he set off to establish himself as a footballing great, seemingly destined to be remembered as his country's greatest player since Pele.

Last week, 12 years on, he returned to his first club Santos - Neymar the celebrity with unimaginable wealth, but a footballer whose fragile body has been badly diminished by injuries.

Neymar has been one of the finest players in the world when at the top of his game, a forward with dazzling skill who "understands football as art", as his former Barcelona coach Luis Enrique once said.

It is equally true that he never managed to fulfil his potential, a player who dreamt of winning the Ballon d'Or but always found himself in the shadow of others at club level, whether it be Lionel Messi or Kylian Mbappe.

Having signed a six-month deal, he is expected to make his second debut for

Santos today, his 33rd birthday, when they play Botafogo-SP in the Sao Paulo state championship.

Neymar is Santos's greatest player since Pele, and he overtook "O Rei" as Brazil's record goal-scorer in September 2023.

But by age 33 Pele had won the World Cup three times, while Neymar's three World Cups have ended in tears.

Each time he has carried a nation's hopes on his shoulders, but the tournament has exposed his vulnerable physique and brittle emotions.

"Now I need to play again," said Neymar. "And only a club like Santos can provide the love I need to prepare for the coming challenges of the next years."

Neymar arrived at Santos training on Monday by helicopter, a rock star's entrance ahead of his return to where it all began.

He could still have much to offer, but it all depends on whether he stays fit. - AFP



ENZO MARESCA hailed Chelsea's mental strength as they came from behind to beat West Ham 2-1 and move into fourth place in the Premier League yesterday.

Maresca's side trailed to Jarrod Bowen's strike late in the first half at Stamford Bridge, sparking jeers from frustrated fans after a lethargic start.

But Maresca's decision to send on Pedro Neto in the second half proved decisive as the Portugal forward bagged Chelsea's equaliser.

As he has been so often over the last two seasons, Cole Palmer was the catalyst for the Blues' 74th-minute winner when his cross deflected in off West Ham defender Aaron Wan-Bissaka.

After a disappointing run of one win in seven League games, Maresca was relieved to see

Resilient Blues

Chelsea impress Maresca in comeback win over West Ham

Chelsea get back on track in spirited fashion.

"It is huge. Today was a tough game, especially mentally. When West Ham come here and sit back with 10 players behind the ball, it's not easy. You have to be mentally strong and you need to be patient," he said.

"We had more than 10 shots in the first half. We had clear chances in the first half but unfortunately, we missed the target.

"With some changes the game changed. Overall we completely deserved to win."

Maresca has been concerned that his players were distracted by speculation over potential transfers in and out of Stamford Bridge leading up to Monday's deadline day.

Relieved that the window has closed, the Italian can focus on leading Chelsea's fight to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top-four finish.

"It was a good weekend for us in terms of results and we knew today was even better," he said.

"We are there and hopefully we can be

there until the end. Playing this kind of game in February, where we are still there, is an important statement."

Maresca had dropped Chelsea keeper Robert Sanchez after his latest costly error in the defeat at Manchester City.

Sanchez's replacement Filip Jorgensen delivered a solid display and Maresca said: "In this moment, Robert needs rest and Filip was very good."

It was a frustrating return to the Bridge for West Ham manager Graham Potter, who was sacked in 2023 after less than seven months in charge of the Blues.

Almost two years after his ruthless dismissal, Potter returned to management with the Hammers last month, but he has mustered just one win from his first five games in all competitions.

"We gave everything. It was relatively even in terms of chances. We come away with nothing in terms of the result but there was lots to be positive about," Potter said.

"You look at the second half. The first goal was a bit of a turning point and we felt

it was a foul, you need those things to go your way. We were doing well but we couldn't quite hang on."

Potter was frustrated that a potential Levi Colwill foul on Bowen was not given in the build-up to Chelsea's equaliser.

But with West Ham sitting 10 points clear of the relegation zone, the former Brighton boss has breathing space to reshape the team in his style.

"The shape of the team was really good. You need a bit of luck. We felt unfortunate with the lead-up to the first goal but it wasn't to be," he said.

"The understanding of what we want to do is there, so we have to build on that." - AFP



West Ham United's Jarrod Bowen (centre) fights for the ball with Chelsea's Noni Madueke (left) and Marc Cucurella during their Premier League match. - AFP/IC

Neto's equaliser explained

THE Premier League have issued a statement to explain why Chelsea's equaliser against West Ham was allowed to stand after *Sky Sports* commentator Gary Neville felt the Blues were very fortunate Pedro Neto's finish was not ruled out.

Neto made it 1-1 at Stamford Bridge with a 64th-minute rebound to cancel out West Ham captain Jarrod Bowen's opener which came shortly before half-time.

But there was controversy surrounding the build-up to substitute Neto's finish. Levi Colwill appeared to foul Hammers goalscorer Bowen off the ball at the start of the hosts' attacking move.

VAR checked whether Marc Cucurella was in an offside position before Neto fired beyond Alphonse Areola but did not go back to Colwill's foul.

It was judged that Marc Guiu did not touch the ball from the initial cross into the box, meaning Cucurella wasn't offside, and the goal stood.

The Premier League said via their Match Centre account on X: "The

referee's call of goal was checked and confirmed by the VAR as there was no factual evidence that Guiu made contact with the ball in the build-up, therefore there was no offside offence."

But Neville argued on commentary that referee Stuart Attwell missed a clear foul on Bowen and said he would be fuming if he was the Hammers. "I actually thought there was a foul on Bowen a lot earlier in the move. I think it was a foul, look at that, Colwill stepping across Bowen.

"I think it's considered to be too far back but I think that is an obvious foul. I thought so at the time. The Bowen foul has to be spotted.

"I would be furious if I was West Ham. I think the referee and assistant referee are both looking at the game from that side, they should spot that.

"Colwill just goes and takes him out so he can't get towards (goalkeeper Filip) Jorgensen."

Sky Sports later confirmed that VAR deemed the apparent foul on Bowen to be outside the attacking phase of play given it came well before Neto's eventual shot. - Express Newspapers

TOTO SPORTS TOTO RESULTS
 DRAW NO: 5921/2025 DATE: 04/02/2025 (TUE)
 STM LOTTERY SDN. BHD.
 1969100090 (84203)

TOTO 4D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

1st Prize	2163
2nd Prize	9350
3rd Prize	5213

Special	4812	1420
	4879	5894
	9913	0091
	8940	5726
	4364	3825
Consolation	5436	2342
	0272	7517
	3876	4067
	0513	3567
	7643	4052

4D JACKPOT

Jackpot 1 **RM 6,576,863.12**

2163	9350	9350	2163
2163	5213	5213	2163
9350	5213	5213	9350

Jackpot 2 **RM 368,034.74**
 Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

4D Zodiac

1st Prize	2163	+ RABBIT
2nd Prize	9350	
3rd Prize	5213	
4th Prize	Special Prize	
5th Prize	Consolation Prize	
6th Prize	Any 4D drawn number	

TOTO 5D & 6D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

5D 1ST **3 7 9 8 0**

2ND	1 3 0 0 6	4TH	7 9 8 0
3RD	8 7 5 9 6	5TH	9 8 0
		6TH	8 0

6D 1ST **4 1 3 6 9 5**

2ND	4 1 3 6 9	or	1 3 6 9 5
3RD	4 1 3 6	or	3 6 9 5
4TH	4 1 3	or	6 9 5
5TH	4 1	or	9 5

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SUPREME 6/58 18 32 33 36 48 55
 Jackpot **RM 16,256,465.03**

POWER 6/55 4 5 7 10 33 44
 Jackpot **RM 7,942,829.03**

STAR 6/49 6 15 25 34 40 43 + 37
 Jackpot 1 **RM 3,287,624.86**
 Jackpot 2 **RM 388,526.79**

Supreme 6/58 (EZ-Bet)
RM 3,931,864
 won on 02/02/2025!
 Visit www.sportstoto.com.my for e-Results and more info.

WINNING NUMBERS IN FULL **damacai**

Draw Date: 04/02/25 (Tue) Draw No: 3889/25 Venue: WISMA GENTING, KL

1+3D SUPER 1+3D

1st Prize	1698
2nd Prize	0393
3rd Prize	5269

Starters	5769	6380	1114	5362	4313	7287	5664	3607	4900	6734
Consolation	5819	6566	1061	5261	1440	0761	6887	4038	8579	2579

1+3D Jackpot **RM15,063,191.10**

1698 + 0393	0393 + 1698
1698 + 5269	5269 + 1698
0393 + 5269	5269 + 0393

Jackpot 2 **RM179,171.70**
 Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

3+3D Bonus

1st Prize	Bonus	1st Prize Bonus
431 698	+ DRAGON	RM200,000.00
2nd Prize	Bonus	2nd Prize Bonus
020 393	+ HORSE	RM1,195,904.60
3rd Prize	Bonus	3rd Prize Bonus
025 269	+ BOAR	RM1,691,506.00

Starters	635 769	796 380	201 114	735 362	474 313	627 287	785 664	913 607	674 900	986 734
Consolation	455 819	576 566	531 061	475 261	081 440	650 761	056 887	134 038	298 579	532 579

3D

1st Prize	698	2nd Prize	393	3rd Prize	269
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3D Jackpot **RM695,775.10**

698 + 393 + 269	393 + 269 + 698
698 + 269 + 393	269 + 698 + 393
393 + 698 + 269	269 + 393 + 698

Winning combination matches the Top 3 Prizes in any order.

1+3D Jackpot 2 RM456,460.30 won on 2/2/2025!

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RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Chelsea 2 (Neto 64, Wan-Bissaka 74-og) West Ham 1 (Bowen 42).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	23	17	5	1	56	21	56
Arsenal	24	14	8	2	49	22	50
Nottm Forest	24	14	5	5	40	27	47
Chelsea	24	12	7	5	47	31	43
Man City	24	12	5	7	48	35	41
Newcastle	24	12	5	7	42	29	41
Bournemouth	24	11	7	6	41	28	40
Aston Villa	24	10	7	7	34	37	37
Fulham	24	9	9	6	36	32	36
Brighton	24	8	10	6	35	38	34
Brentford	24	9	4	11	42	42	31
Crystal Palace	24	7	9	8	28	30	30
Man Utd	24	8	5	11	28	34	29
Tottenham	24	8	3	13	48	37	27
West Ham	24	7	6	11	29	46	27
Everton	23	6	8	9	23	28	26
Wolves	24	5	4	15	34	52	19
Leicester	24	4	5	15	25	53	17
Ipswich	24	3	7	14	22	49	16
Southampton	24	2	3	19	18	54	9

CHAMPIONSHIP: Middlesbrough 2 Sunderland 3.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	30	18	9	3	60	19	63
Sheff Utd	30	19	6	5	41	21	61
Burnley	30	15	13	2	36	9	58
Sunderland	30	16	10	4	45	26	58
Blackburn	30	13	6	11	34	29	45
West Brom	30	10	14	6	39	27	44

LA LIGA: Girona 2 (Ruiz 8, Asprilla 79) Las Palmas 1 (Fabio Silva 82).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	22	15	4	3	50	21	49
Atletico	22	14	6	2	37	14	48
Barcelona	22	14	3	5	60	24	45
A. Bilbao	22	11	8	3	33	20	41
Villarreal	22	10	7	5	44	33	37
R. Vallecano	22	8	6	26	24	32	32

SERIE A: Cagliari 1 (Piccoli 55) Lazio 2 (Zaccagni 41, Castellanos 64).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli	23	17	3	3	38	16	54
Inter Milan	22	15	6	1	56	19	51
Atalanta	23	14	5	4	49	26	47
Lazio	23	13	3	7	40	31	42
Juventus	23	9	13	1	39	20	40
Fiorentina	22	11	6	5	37	23	39

SHORTS

Germany whip Malaysia

MALAYSIA were trounced 12-4 by Germany in their opening 2025 Men's Indoor Hockey World Cup Group B match in Porec, Croatia, on Monday.

Nicolas Proske and Ben Hasbacht top scored for Germany with four goals each at the Zatika Sports Centre.

Paul Dosch, Alec von Schwerin, Anton Boeckel and Max Silanoglu chipped in with one apiece for Germany, who are coached by Jan Rabente.

Malaysia, under the guidance of coach Rodzhanizam Mat Radzi, replied through Abdul Khaliq Hamirin (fourth and 25th minutes), Muhammad Firdaus Omar (11th) and Muhammad Najmi Farizal Jazlan (23rd).

Rodzhanizam attributed Malaysia's heavy defeat to mistakes made by his players.

"Facing the Germans, even though we lost by a large margin, our players did well. However, there were a few small mistakes that allowed Germany to score.

"When we look at the game, it's not that we can't play well... Simple mistakes were made, especially in defence," he said in a video clip shared by the Malaysian

Al-Rayyan kick holders Al-Ain out

HOLDERS Al-Ain slumped out of the Asian Champions League Elite yesterday as the side from the United Arab Emirates lost 2-1 to Qatar's Al-Rayyan to end their hopes of a place in the last 16 with one round of group games remaining.

Second-half goals from Mahmoud Trezeguet and Roger Guedes saw Al-Rayyan fight back from going behind to Alejandro Romero's 42nd minute opener for the home side, who needed to win to harbour any remaining chance of reaching the knockout phase.

The loss was Al-Ain's fifth in seven games and, after Iraq's Al-Shorta drew 1-1 with Esteghlal of Iran in Tehran, the reigning champions sit

bottom of the 12-team table on two points.

Sides finishing in the top eight in the league phase in both west and east Asia progress to March's knockout rounds.

Al-Ain's elimination comes nine months after the club claimed the continental crown for the second time, defeating Japan's Yokohama F Marinos over two legs in the final in May.

But the defence of their title has been shambolic and Al-Ain lost in front of their own fans at the Hazza bin Zayed Stadium after taking the lead on the counter attack through Romero's curling first-time strike into the top corner.

Trezeguet levelled five minutes into the



Point to prove

Letshanaa ready to give her all at BAMTC

Letshanaa. - BERNAMAPIC

ACKNOWLEDGING her status as an "underdog" at the 2025 Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships (BAMTC), national women's singles player K. Letshanaa remains determined to prove that she can put up a strong fight in the tournament.

The 21-year-old said she is currently discussing with her coach to work on her weaknesses and improve her performance leading up to the tournament, which will take place in Qingdao, China, starting Feb 11.

"Still haven't found consistency yet. So we are looking into that now. What are the mistakes that we have to improve upon, and also discussing with coach Kenneth (Jonassen) as well," Letshanaa told reporters after a training session at Akademi Badminton Malaysia (ABM) Academy in Bukit Kiara, Kuala Lumpur, yesterday.

"Because we have to prepare for BAMTC and we still have a few more days, we are figuring out what we can correct in these few days to perform better at BAMTC.

"I can say that we want to give our best, like

how I did in Indonesia. The results will follow. Since we are still underdogs, when we give our best effort, the results will come."

Malaysia are in Group B and will face Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Kazakhstan. The top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinals.

Professional mixed doubles pair Goh Soon Huat-Shevon Lai will be the only experienced players in the mixed doubles category, alongside young national pair Hoo Pang Ron-Cheng Su Yin.

In the men's singles category, Leong Jun Hao and Justin Hoh will replace professional player Lee Zii Jia and Ng Tze Yong, who are currently recovering from injuries.

Meanwhile, Letshanaa and Wong Ling Ching have been selected to represent Malaysia in the women's singles category.

Malaysia's men's doubles lineup will feature world No. 12 pair Man Wei Chong-Tee Kai Wun, along with Yap Roy King-Wan Arif Wan Junaidi.

The women's doubles representatives will be Teoh Mei Xing-Go Pei Kee and Tan Zhing Yi-Cheng Su Hui. - Bernama

Hockey Confederation (MHC) yesterday.

Soon Huat-Shevon back in training

NATIONAL professional mixed doubles pair Goh Soon Huat-Shevon Lai Jamie have joined the centralised training camp at Akademi Badminton Malaysia (ABM) in Bukit Kiara as part of their preparations for the 2025 Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships (BAMTC) in Qiandao, China, from Feb 11 to 16.

National mixed doubles coach Nova Widianto confirmed that the pair had begun physical training and would start using the training courts tomorrow.

"Yes, Remy (ABM Coaching Director) informed me that they have started their physical training," he told reporters after a

team training session at ABM.

Nova added that due to time constraints, there are no plans for overseas training camps, and that all the players will undergo intensive preparation focusing on tactical and physical training at ABM.

Mohd Rizal to coach Thai national team

THE coaching talent of Malaysians continues to be sought after by foreign countries, with the latest being former national track cyclist Mohd Rizal Tisin, who has been hired by the Thai national team.

Mohd Rizal said he took up his coaching job in Thailand last month after being given a one-year contract by the Thai Cycling Association.

The 40-year-old coach, who has previously trained teams from Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, said his primary task was to help the country's cyclists prepare for the 2025 SEA Games in Thailand, scheduled from Dec 9-20 this year.

"Actually, they (Thailand) had approached me back in 2018, but I declined because I was under contract with Singapore.

"After my duties with Indonesia ended last May, Thailand approached me again. I agreed to the deal offered in December last year and began my role in January 2025," he told Bernama.

Mohd Rizal admitted that he was actually waiting for an offer to return to coaching the national squad, but it is understood that there are no vacant positions at the moment.

second half when he controlled Murad Naji Hussein's cross from the right before slotting beyond goalkeeper Khaled Eisa.

Guedes then took advantage of Al-Ain's slack defending 15 minutes from time, the Brazilian given the space to allow Adam Baireiro's throw to roll onto his left foot and slot home.

The league phase in west Asia had been dominated by clubs from Saudi Arabia and that continued on Monday as Al-Ahli handed Qatar's Al-Sadd a 3-1 defeat to remain in first place while third-placed Al-Nassr won 4-0 against Al-Wasl of the UAE.

Roberto Firmino, Roger Ibanez and Riyad Mahrez were on target for Al-Ahli, who fought back from going behind to a first minute goal by reigning Asian Player of the Year Akram Affif.

Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice after Ali Al-Hassan had given Al-Nassr the lead in Riyadh and Mohammed Al-Fatih added a late fourth for a side who, like Al-Ahli, have already booked their berth in the next round. - AFP

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1st Prize **2682**

2nd Prize **1138**

3rd Prize **4046**

SPECIAL	CONSOlation
2998	7659
3651	4062
8945	8127
5561	4420
6006	0198
	8965
	4738

4D Jackpot

Jackpot 1 **RM8,828,932.02**

PARTIALLY WON

2682 + 1138	2682 + 4046
1138 + 2682	1138 + 4046
4046 + 2682	4046 + 1138

Jackpot 2 **RM330,008.25**

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Jackpot 1 - Group 1 + Golden Number

Jackpot 2 **RM247,600.63** **WON**

Jackpot 2 - Group 2 + Golden Number

GROUP 1	8 2 3 8 4 6
GROUP 2	8 2 3 8 4 OR 2 3 8 4 6
GROUP 3	8 2 3 8 OR 3 8 4 6
GROUP 4	8 2 3 OR 8 4 6
GROUP 5	8 2 OR 8 4 6
	OR 3 8
GOLDEN NUMBER	0 6

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MANCHESTER CITY easily topped the spending charts in the January transfer window with the signing of Spanish midfielder Nico Gonzalez on deadline day to complete a busy month for the ailing Premier League champions.

City have endured a testing time on the pitch and sit fifth in the Premier League table with their hopes of a record-extending fifth successive domestic championship in tatters.

But the rebuild appears to have started in earnest with more than £180 million (RM995m) spent by Pep Guardiola's outfit - more than the combined amount paid by the other 19 English top-flight clubs in a relatively quiet window.

City's spending was the second-biggest outlay ever worldwide by a club in the January transfer window behind Chelsea's £274 million (RM1.5b) in 2023, according to *Transfermarkt*.

City paid Porto €60 million (RM330m) for 23-year-old Gonzalez - their fourth major signing in the window.

City have struggled in midfield for much of the campaign with talisman Rodri sidelined since September with a serious knee injury.

The move for Gonzalez plugs a gap that has become exposed over recent months.

Gonzalez is a box to box midfielder who is also capable of operating deep or pushing into a more advanced role.

He's caught the eye at Porto having only moved to the Dragao 18 months ago from Barcelona.

Schooled at the Nou Camp, he is a possession-based footballer that will suit Guardiola's City set-up.

Gonzalez will add legs in the middle of the park and his ball retention fits the profile of what Guardiola wants from his midfielders.

City have struggled in transition time and

Big splash

City Premier spenders as transfer window closes

again this season and were ruthlessly exposed by Arsenal on Sunday.

Defender Abdokdir Khusanov joined from Lens for £33 million (RM181.5m), Egypt forward Omar Marmoush arrived from Eintracht Frankfurt for £59 million (RM324.5m) while defender Vitor Reis was signed from Palmeiras for £2.9

million (RM159.5m)

It is quite a change of direction by City who usually do not feel the need to make big signings in mid-season. The last time they made a significant signing in January was 2018 when they brought in Athletic Bilbao defender Aymeric Laporte.

While fullback Kyle Walker left to join AC Milan on loan, Guardiola will be content that his squad has been bolstered for the second half of a campaign that features a looming

Champions League playoff against Real Madrid for a last-16 spot.

While City splashed the cash, Premier League leaders Liverpool made no signings and second-placed Arsenal also failed to bolster their forward line despite injuries to Gabriel Jesus and Bukayo Saka.

Aston Villa cashed in on Colombia striker Jhon Duran for whom Al-Nassr paid £64 million (RM352m) but manager Unai Emery will be satisfied that Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford joined last week on loan.

Three-times Champions League winner Marco Asensio has also arrived at Villa Park on loan from Paris St Germain in a deal completed on Deadline Day.

Injury-plagued Tottenham Hotspur began the transfer window by signing Czech goalkeeper Antonin Kinsky from Slavia Prague for £12 million (RM69m) and concluded it by agreeing to take winger Mathys Tel on loan from Bayern Munich.

Manchester United fans may be left wondering whether they have been weakened in the window with Anthony also going out on loan to Real Betis and no forwards coming in.

Champions League qualification hopefuls Nottingham Forest have often been frenetic in past January windows but this time spent virtually nothing. Some of their rivals in the battle to qualify for Europe did strengthen though.

Brighton & Hove Albion signed Paraguayan midfielder Diego Gomez from Inter Miami for £12 million and also spent £20 million (RM110m) on Greek defender Stefanos Tzimas, who will stay at Nuremberg for the rest of the season.

Previous big spenders Chelsea kept their powder dry while Newcastle United were also inactive in January, both wary of staying within Profit and Sustainability Rules (PSR).

Of teams involved in the Premier League relegation battle, Wolves strengthened their defence with Emmanuel Agbadou joining from Reims and Burkina Faso international Nasser Djiga signing on deadline day from Red Star Belgrade.



Khusanov



Marmoush



Nico Gonzalez. - REUTERS/SPIC

