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Israel facing unprecedented global isolation

More nations recognise Palestine and condemn Tel Aviv's actions as genocidal, says academic.

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Women's Aid Organisation urges the government to prioritise structural reforms in Budget 2026 in order to attract more women back into the workforce. – ***MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN***

'Tax breaks alone not enough to woo women back to work'

Govt should focus on family-friendly workplace policies, including mandatory childcare centres, flexible work and extended annual leave: WAO

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Upcoming Sabah polls will not tip country's political balance no matter who wins as all major players involved already aligned with Pakatan Harapan-led federal government, say analysts.

Israel faces global isolation over Gaza war: Analysts

'Number of UN members recognising sovereignty of Palestine has risen from 140 to 156'

BY **QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI**
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PETALING JAYA: Two years into the devastating Gaza war that has killed tens of thousands and pushed the enclave to the brink of famine, political analysts say Israel now faces unprecedented global isolation as more nations recognise Palestine and condemn Tel Aviv's actions as genocidal.

The shift comes amid renewed outrage over Israel's seizure of the Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) last week, a humanitarian convoy carrying aid to Gaza, in which 23 Malaysians were among about 400 people detained during a naval raid.

International media reported that Israeli forces intercepted 41 ships in a 12-hour operation before towing them to the Ashdod Port in southern Israel.

The Malaysians were later freed following intensive diplomatic efforts and were expected to return home yesterday.

Nusantara Academy of Strategic Research senior fellow Prof Dr Azmi Hassan said global opinion has turned sharply against Israel, with even its traditional allies beginning to distance themselves.

"In just two years, the geopolitical landscape has changed. The number of United Nations (UN) members recognising Palestine as a sovereign nation has risen from over 140 to 156, including key countries such as France, Australia, Canada, Spain and Ireland."

Azmi said even United States President Donald Trump, once a staunch ally of Israel, recently pledged to "reinstate Israel into the international community", adding that the remark reflects how far Tel Aviv's diplomatic standing has fallen.

"Israel is now viewed as a pariah state and this is entirely the result of its own conduct in Gaza."

He added that without Washington's backing, Israel would not be able to sustain its current actions.

"No one expected more than 60,000 deaths or for Gaza City to be reduced to rubble. Israel's actions are now openly compared to genocidal practices and global sentiment overwhelmingly favours Palestine, not just on religious grounds, but because of the sheer scale of the humanitarian disaster."

Azmi said Malaysia's solidarity with Palestine has been consistent since the 1960s, and the GSF incident reaffirmed the nation's enduring commitment to humanitarian aid despite rising risks.

He accused Israel of weaponising food and medicine, adding that aid is being restricted as part of a deliberate strategy to "break the Palestinian spirit".

"By denying basic necessities, Israel is committing acts that many in the international community now classify as genocide."

Azmi said the war was unlikely to spread beyond Gaza and the West Bank, as most Arab nations, including Iran, have no interest in escalation, though the US veto in the UN Security Council remains a major obstacle to peace.

"President Trump's 20-point peace plan, which pressures both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas through mediators such as Qatar and Egypt, may not be perfect but it shows a clear political intent to end the conflict."

He added that Trump's expected attendance at the Asean Summit later this year offers a crucial opportunity for regional leaders to raise Southeast Asia's humanitarian concerns directly with Washington.

Meanwhile, Singapore Institute of International Affairs senior fellow Dr Oh Ei Sun said the two-year war in Gaza continues because Israel and Hamas remain adamantly committed to each other's total annihilation, making it difficult for any party to resolve the conflict.

He said global opinion towards Israel has shifted in recent months, with public sentiment and consequently elected governments in much of the Western world moving towards a more immediate recognition of Palestine.

Oh said the prolonged war has further destabilised the Middle East, a region long unsettled by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"It has spiralled into on-and-off armed clashes involving Israel on one side and groups such as Hezbollah, Iran and the Houthis on the other."

He added that the regional bloc must work closely with the US to have any meaningful impact on peace efforts in the Middle East.

He also said the conflict is likely to continue intermittently until one side is decisively defeated, making pathways towards lasting peace or accountability for war crimes uncertain.



PM briefs Rulers on key national, regional developments

BY **KIRTINEE RAMESH**
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PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday briefed the Conference of Rulers at Istana Negara on key national and regional developments, including preparations for the upcoming 47th Asean Summit and Budget 2026.

Anwar said the session also discussed the expected visit of United States President Donald Trump later this month and Malaysia's position on Trump's proposed Gaza peace plan.

"It was a normal pre-council meeting of the Conference of Rulers discussing current developments, such as Trump's upcoming visit, various policy issues and preparations for Budget 2026," he told reporters after officiating at the Asean Conference on Future-Ready Public Service yesterday.

In his keynote address, Anwar urged Asean nations to build civil services that are efficient, technologically advanced and rooted in moral purpose and integrity.

He said public service, although often overlooked, forms the foundation of civilisation and must evolve to meet modern challenges.

"Public service is seldom glamorous, yet it is the unassuming architecture of civilisation. The question before us is how to make that architecture future-ready, strong enough to withstand shocks and flexible enough to serve citizens whose expectations are constantly changing."

He said Asean is facing shifting global realities, from trade tensions and climate change to rising demands for transparency, adding that stability alone would not prepare the region for the future.

He also said morality must anchor governance, and "progress without compassion or justice is hollow".

Highlighting Malaysia's reform agenda, Anwar cited digital identity systems, data-driven subsidies and the National Energy Transition Roadmap as examples of how policies are being aligned to better serve citizens.

He said a future-ready civil service must operate transparently, uphold integrity and use technology responsibly.

"Digital government should lighten the citizen's day, never add to the burden."

No alcohol at govt functions, says Anwar

BY **HARITH KAMAL**
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PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has reminded Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing and his ministry (Motac) that alcohol must not be served at any official government function.

He said Motac's explanation that alcoholic beverages were served only after the official programme had ended was unacceptable, as the government maintains a clear policy prohibiting alcohol at official events.

"Motac stated that the drinks were served after the official programme concluded. However, it was still within the same venue and considered part of the event.

"We have given a firm warning to the minister and the ministry. This mistake must not be repeated. Regardless of the justification, it was completely inappropriate."

He was speaking to reporters at the Bunga Raya Complex after sending off visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Anwar also cautioned all Cabinet members and government agencies against treating the matter lightly.

"I want to remind every member of the Cabinet and the entire government machinery that negligence on this issue will not be tolerated."

Anwar's comments followed public outrage over alcohol being served during a dinner held in conjunction with the Global Travel Meet, which was attended by Tiong.

Photos from the event, which have since been widely circulated online, show the minister and several guests holding glasses of wine and beer.

On the issue, Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming urged the public not to blow the matter out of proportion, adding that it could tarnish Malaysia's image ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VM2026).

He said the dinner was a privately organised commercial event held in collaboration with the government to welcome international guests.

"The event's name itself, Global Travel Meet, clearly shows that it was an international commercial programme attended by participants from various backgrounds, including both Muslims and non-Muslims," Nga said after officiating at the National Observance of World Habitat Day 2025 in Cyberjaya yesterday.

"In events of such global nature, the serving of alcoholic beverages is commonly practised.

"However, we have never, and will never, ask our Muslim friends to be involved in such matters."

Nga said Malaysia is a nation that respects diversity, adding that Malaysia Truly Asia is more than a slogan as it reflects unity in diversity and interfaith harmony.

"We respect everyone, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and accord appropriate freedom to all our international guests."

He added that the Global Travel Meet secured investments and revenue worth about US$420 million (RM2 billion), calling it a positive outcome for the country.

Nga urged all parties to focus on promoting Malaysia's image as a harmonious, open and respectful nation that welcomes visitors from around the world.

"If we continue to blow up issues such as this, it benefits no one. It would only harm the nation and our tourism sector."

The controversy erupted after Tiong came under fire for reports that alcoholic beverages were served at the dinner.

Critics accused the ministry of being insensitive to Muslim attendees, with some even calling for Tiong's resignation.

Tiong later clarified that Tourism Malaysia had only played a facilitating role in the event, which was organised by the private sector, and had used the occasion to promote the VM2026 calendar.

'State polls unlikely to shift national power balance'

Analysts say all major blocs aligned with Unity govt, with state vote set to focus on local control and governance

BY **IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE**
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PETALING JAYA: The upcoming Sabah election will not alter the country's political balance no matter who wins, said political observers, as all major state players are already aligned with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's Pakatan Harapan-led (PH) federal government, meaning that the real battle will be over local control, not national power.

Political scientist Professor James Chin said Anwar has little reason to be concerned about the outcome because both Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) and Barisan Nasional (BN) – the main blocs vying for control – are part of the Unity government.

"He's not worried. Anwar already won the election before it even started," Chin told *theSun*.

He said caretaker chief minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor and GRS missed a strategic opportunity to dissolve the 16th Sabah State Legislative Assembly last year and tighten their hold before the state mineral resources corruption scandal broke.

"And then, there was also the floods in Sabah," added Chin.

With the Asean Summit scheduled for later this month, Chin expects polling to be next month, as the Election Commission would likely avoid overlapping the two major events.

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research geostrategist Prof Azmi Hassan echoed that whichever party forms the next state government, it will still seek cooperation with PH at the federal level, even if contesting independently.

"Whichever party forms the state government will want to work with PH at the federal level.

"We can see that PH's seat arrangement with GRS in Sabah is minimal, but the understanding is there."

Azmi added that even the opposition Warisan would likely cooperate with the Unity government if it comes to power.

"Warisan does not work with BN in Sabah, but I don't see any issue of them cooperating with PH-BN at the national level."

He noted that party campaigns would revolve around state concerns – infrastructure, flood mitigation and economic development – rather than federal politics.

"That's why I believe around 90% of the issues in this election will be local. National issues will take a back seat."

Asia Group Advisors associate director Kamles Kumar said the state polls underscore Malaysia's shift towards coalition-based politics, a trend reflected globally.

"In this environment, the formation of coalitions after the elections is becoming more common."

He said GRS, despite contesting against BN and Warisan, is positioning itself as the next state government.

Kamles said Umno's influence in Sabah has weakened since 2018, even as veteran politicians continue to dominate.

"There is always space for a new government and new faces.

"But Sabah politics is still driven by money and political legacy.

"Removing the old guard is not easy, especially for younger politicians."

He said Warisan may have a slight edge, but GRS benefits from incumbency and control of state resources.

"There are a lot of internal problems in Warisan that need attention.

"GRS, on the other hand, has the advantage of incumbency – the coalition is in power and has the resources to maintain its position," he added.

The 17th Sabah election is expected to be held by November following the dissolution of the State Legislative Assembly on Monday. A total of 73 seats will be contested.



Political parties step up visibility on the ground with colourful banners and flags as election fever heats up. – ***BERNAMAPIC***

Sabahans urged to choose stability over political experiments

PETALING JAYA: Sabah BN is banking on its long-standing record of governance and stability to win over voters, even as the state's political landscape grows increasingly crowded with new parties and coalitions.

State Umno treasurer and Libaran MP Datuk Suhaimi Nasir said the rise of multiple local alliances has created a new political reality, one that demands maturity and discernment from both leaders and voters.

"I believe the people of Sabah have become more discerning. They now realise that political stability is the foundation of the state's progress," Suhaimi said in his WhatsApp reply to *theSun*.

He said what sets BN apart from others is its proven track record and experience in governing.

"We are not a party that only appears during elections. BN has played a major role in rebuilding Sabah since taking over the state administration in 1994."

Suhaimi said BN's development efforts have long focused on rural infrastructure, poverty eradication and essential services, while ensuring close coordination with the federal government.

"This has been reflected in the implementation of strategic projects such as the Pan Borneo Highway, expansion of the Kota Kinabalu International Airport, major hospitals, sea ports and generating rural electricity supply."

Suhaimi, who is Libaran Umno division chief, also said: "The voters know that when BN governs, the state remains stable and development stays on course.

"That's why I'm confident Sabahans will choose stability over experiments. They want a government that knows how to lead and can bring the state forward."

On BN's electoral prospects, Suhaimi expressed confidence that the coalition is prepared to return to power.

"We are not obsessed with numbers, but Sabah BN is prepared to form the government. We have made thorough preparations in every constituency and grassroots feedback shows that people want to return to experienced and stable governance."

Suhami said BN's strength lies in its organised machinery, disciplined campaign structure and credible candidates.

"Our confidence is not based on assumptions, but on the strength of our organisation and the public's acceptance of the message of stability that BN brings."

Outlining BN's core agenda, Suhaimi said its manifesto will focus on three pillars – effective governance and political stability, stronger state-federal cooperation and inclusive economic and rural development.

"Our priority is not just about making political promises, but about meeting the real needs of the people. We want continuous development without political disruptions, fairer revenue distribution and more job opportunities, particularly through rural infrastructure upgrades, and education and skills training."

He said BN's campaign would emphasise tangible outcomes rather than lofty pledges.

"What we offer is hard work, honesty and a clear direction.

"With the support of the people, we are ready to lead Sabah once again towards true stability and meaningful progress."

The Sabah election will see BN facing off against GRS, amid strained ties between the two blocs at the state level.

Meanwhile, Warisan has confirmed plans to contest all 73 seats. – By ***IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE***

Warisan confident of forming Sabah government

PETALING JAYA: Warisan is confident that it can independently form the next Sabah state government despite contesting the state polls without aligning itself with any political bloc, said its vice-president Datuk Junz Wong.

He said Warisan's decision to go solo was based on careful internal analysis and strong on-the-ground feedback. He said it was not a gamble, but a calculated move to return power to the people.

"Yes, of course we're optimistic, but not because we're arrogant – we're positive. We've done our homework, our analysis. We are not new to politics; we've been doing this for a long time," he said when contacted by *theSun*.

Wong, who is also the Tanjung Aru incumbent assemblyman stressed that Warisan's ultimate goal was not merely to contest, but to form a government that could effectively serve the people of Sabah.

"The current situation in Sabah is truly bad. People are struggling. If we don't form the government, we can't help. So, if we had no chance at all of forming the government on our own, what would be the point of going it alone?" he said.

Warisan, led by former chief minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal, is expected to contest all 73 state seats. Wong said the party believes the people are ready to give Warisan another chance.

He criticised the current state leadership under GRS for missing the opportunity to call for an election a year ago, before several major crises hit the state.

"If you ask me, they missed the golden opportunity. It should have been a year ago. Back then, there weren't any major protests and many of the current issues hadn't happened yet."

Wong highlighted growing public dissatisfaction, citing issues such as recurring floods, prolonged water disruptions, inconsistent power supply and frequent electrical outages, and the worsening economy as evidence that Sabahans are losing patience.

"There have been multiple floods, the mining scandal, the death of Zara Qairina Mahathir and now the situation has become even worse. People are suffering.

"Cost of living is rising, jobs are hard to find and businesses, especially in the food and service sectors, are struggling."

Wong also dismissed the notion that GRS, BN and PH are offering distinct choices to voters, claiming that actually all three are working together behind the scenes.

"The three blocs are pretending to be separate, but they're all connected. PH is working with BN. BN is aligned with GRS. So if you don't want PH or BN, you should know that voting for GRS is the same as voting for them (PH or BN)."

He urged voters who want real change and an independent Sabah voice to rally behind Warisan.

"We are not here just to win a few seats. We are here to take back the government for the people." – By ***IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE***

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Health Ministry moves towards total vape ban

'Purchase, use of smoking products by minors prohibited since October'

BY **QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI**
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PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry is moving towards a total ban on electronic cigarettes and vapes, with a proposal expected to be presented to the Cabinet soon for policy approval.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Lukanisman Awang Sauni said the ministry has enforced a ban on the purchase and use of smoking products, including vapes, by minors under the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024 (Act 852), which also prohibits online sales.

He added that nicotine remains regulated under the Poisons Act 1952, but electronic cigarette liquids now fall under Act 852, which takes effect this month.

"All smoking products, including vapes, must be registered with the ministry under Section 3 of the Act before import, manufacture or distribution, while online sales are prohibited under Section 10, with offenders facing fines, imprisonment or both," he told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

In terms of revenue, Lukanisman said the vape tax collection in 2024 amounted to RM111 million but the estimated cost of treating diseases related to e-cigarettes or vaping, including product use-associated lung injury, reached RM223 million and is expected to rise, showing that the healthcare burden outweighs fiscal benefits.

"The Health Ministry acknowledges the challenges the country may face, such as the risk of smuggling and the black market, should a total ban be implemented.

"Therefore, any move towards prohibition would be accompanied by comprehensive mitigation strategies, including integrated enforcement involving multiple ministries and agencies, local authorities and others, in addition to strengthening manpower resources."

He also said the prohibition approach would be implemented in stages, with enforcement, education and community support as key components.

The role of NGOs and communities would also be mobilised to reduce demand and encourage behavioural change.

"However, legislation alone is not sufficient, as protecting public health requires the involvement of all parties. As such, community participation is crucial in this effort," he said, adding that the public is encouraged to lodge complaints regarding violations of smoking product laws via WhatsApp at 010-860 8949 or the website at www.JomLapor.com.

Lukanisman said such an approach not only strengthens enforcement but also mobilises all Malaysians to work together towards achieving a smoke-free nation by 2040.

He added that under the "Whole of Nation Approach", the ministry launched Operation Safe Lungs on Aug 1, with enforcement carried out jointly with the Customs Department, the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry, police, local authorities and other agencies, to enforce strict control over vape distribution, sales and compliance.

"In addition, prevention and education programmes such as *Kesihatan Oral Tanpa Amalan Merokok*, *JomSihat*, *Doktor Muda* and Back to Cinema have been implemented to provide early exposure to children and teenagers about the dangers of smoking products, instil positive attitudes and to prevent them from taking up smoking or vaping."

Call for stronger cooperation to address urban crises

BY **HARITH KAMAL**
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CYBERJAYA: Malaysia has urged stronger international and regional cooperation to confront the world's mounting urban crises, from climate change and natural disasters to deepening socio-economic pressures.

Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming said these challenges demand collective, coordinated responses across all levels of government, the private sector and civil society.

Speaking at the National Observance of World Habitat Day 2025 event, themed "Urban Crisis Response", Nga said the theme could not be more timely as cities worldwide, including Malaysia, face rising floods, heatwaves and pollution.

"The question before us is not whether a crisis would occur, but how we prepare, respond and recover, together," he said at the event in Cyberjaya yesterday.

He also said this year's observance carries special significance as Malaysia marks its first World Habitat Day as UN-Habitat Assembly president, coinciding with its Asean Chairmanship.

"This convergence of regional and global leadership empowers Malaysia to help steer the course toward a more sustainable and equitable urban future."

He added that Malaysia, through its UN-Habitat presidency, is advocating to mainstream the New Urban Agenda into the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change process to ensure sustainability commitments translate into concrete, measurable action at local levels.

Nga also underscored the role of local governments as first responders in crises such as floods and natural disasters, adding that they bear critical responsibility in maintaining access to housing, land and essential services.

"When floods strike or livelihoods are disrupted, it is the city councils, municipal authorities and district offices that act first, and act fastest."



Nga presenting an award at the event, alongside Housing and Local Government Ministry deputy secretary-general (Sustainability and Strategic Planning) Tuan Mohd Hazli Ahmad Adnan and Sepang Municipal Council president Dr Ani Ahmad. – ***ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN***

He said Malaysia's rapid disaster response and smart city initiatives have shown the value of empowered local authorities, adding that access to resources, real-time data and community partnerships is key to building resilient towns and cities.

"Empowering local governments is essential to creating communities that could adapt and prepare for future crises."

He called on all stakeholders from federal and local governments to private entities and citizens to work together to secure every Malaysian's right to a safe home and a sustainable environment.

"Plans require action. Success would be measured not by promises, but by our implementation, our partnerships and our collective participation."

Nga ended his speech with a quote from Nelson Mandela:

"It always seems impossible until it is done. So let us get it done, together."

Over 500 commercial vehicle licences suspended: Loke

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 562 licences belonging to commercial vehicle operators have been suspended or are in the process of being suspended under the Road Transport Department's (RTD) Safety Inspection and Audit from 2019 until August this year.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke said during the same period, 11 operator licences were revoked and 12 vehicle permits were terminated.

"In addition, 56 vehicle permits were suspended and 24 warnings were issued, bringing the total number of enforcement actions to 665.

"We will continue to strengthen enforcement efforts, including carrying out surprise and random inspections to ensure compliance with the regulations in place," he said during question time at the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He was responding to a supplementary question from Mordi Bimol (PH-Mas Gading), who asked about the number of companies that failed to comply with audit regulations and the actions taken against them.

Loke said based on RTD records up to April, there were a total of 48,002 registered commercial vehicle operating companies, while the number of licensed commercial vehicles, including buses and lorries, stood at 372,586 under the supervision of the Land Public Transport Agency.

As of September, he said the RTD conducted 7,228 audits nationwide.

"The implementation of these audits is a continuous measure to ensure the industry's safety compliance is strengthened, thereby supporting the Transport Ministry's efforts to reduce crashes involving heavy vehicles and ensure the safety of all road users."

He also said all operators are required to comply with seven provisions under the Industrial Code of Practice, including the appointment of safety officers, installation and monitoring of GPS devices, adherence to driving and rest hours, preparation of an emergency response plan and provision of company hotline numbers for public complaints. – Bernama

Unresolved Sarawak stateless cases mount

KUCHING: An increasing number of stateless infants and children in Sarawak are being discovered, adding to a growing backlog of unresolved cases pending federal approval.

Sarawak United Peoples' Party (SUPP) secretary-general Datuk Sebastian Ting said the state government must be granted autonomy to issue birth certificates for stateless babies and children, as processing in Putrajaya remains too slow to address new cases.

Ting, who is also state tourism, culture and creative arts deputy minister, said the problem would persist as long as all decision-making is concentrated in the federal capital.

"Sarawak needs to be given autonomy to solve the stateless cases that are increasingly being uncovered. We in SUPP are handling countless cases."

He said if Sarawak was empowered to issue birth certificates, the process of obtaining MyKad would become more straightforward for affected children.

Ting said his office is currently handling a large backlog of stateless cases, involving individuals from infants to the elderly.

"At the moment, most cases take years to resolve as they have to be referred to Putrajaya."

SUPP is a component of the ruling Gabungan Parti Sarawak coalition, which also includes Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, Parti Rakyat Sarawak and the Progressive Democratic Party. – *By* ***JOSEPH PETER***

BUDGET 2026 WISH LIST

‘Tax breaks alone will not return women to workforce’

Limited fiscal space of M’sia curtails sustainability of incentives as public spending needs grow: NGO

BY **T.C. KHOR**
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PETALING JAYA: The Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO) has cautioned that tax incentives alone would not be enough to bring women back into the workforce, urging the government to prioritise structural reforms in Budget 2026 instead.

Its advocacy manager Gandipan Gopalan said while tax deductions for employers who hire women returning to work may encourage participation, such incentives are “a double-edged sword” given Malaysia’s limited fiscal space.

“Malaysia’s low tax-to-GDP ratio of 12.5% limits the government’s capacity to sustain long-term tax breaks at a time when public spending needs are growing,” he said.

He also said the government should focus on family-friendly workplace policies, including mandatory childcare centres in large firms, flexible work arrangements and extended annual leave, which would help women not just return to work, but also remain in the labour force.

“Structural measures create sustainable change. They build environments that support women over the long term, not just through one-off tax incentives,” he said.

Gandipan added that part of any budget increase should be channelled into government-managed trust funds that provide microfinancing at zero or low interest, particularly targeting underprivileged women and survivors of gender-based violence.

“Such measures empower women to rebuild their lives, achieve economic independence and contribute meaningfully to national growth,” he said.

According to the Statistics Department, women’s labour force participation stood at 56.3% in 2023, among the lowest in Asean.

Data from SME Corp shows that women own just over 20% of SMEs, although SMEs contribute about RM613 billion or 37.4% of the country’s GDP.

The World Bank estimates that raising female participation to 60% could boost GDP growth by up to 1.5 percentage points a year.

Women Entrepreneur Network Association representative and MADCash CEO Nuraizah Shamsul Baharin said past allocations for women entrepreneurs have not reached the ground effectively.

“We have yet to meet anyone who received the RM470 million channelled through SME Bank, BSN, Bank Rakyat and Mara last year,” she said.

“The application process is slow and excludes women in the informal and micro sectors.”

She said funds should also be disbursed through fintech platforms, such as MADCash, which offers zero-interest loans and 10-month entrepreneurship programmes, and through civil society partners that have direct access to underserved groups.

“If Malaysia wants to double women’s share of entrepreneurship from 20% to 40% by 2030, allocations must grow by 15% to 20% annually, with greater support for entrepreneurs in the B40 and M40 income groups,” she said.

The Gender Budget Group (GBG), a coalition of 24 civil society organisations and academics, urged the government to tie gender-related allocations in Budget 2026 to measurable economic outcomes.

“Budgets must be instruments of equality and efficiency. Allocations mean little if they do not translate into access or outcomes,” said its lead and Engender Consultancy founder Omna Sreeni-Ong.

“Transparent data and gender-responsive budgeting are critical to ensure every ringgit spent delivers real value.”

GBG’s memorandum for Budget 2026 also calls for gender pay gap reporting, stronger institutional accountability across ministries through gender-responsive budgeting and greater investment in the care economy to enable more women to work.

It recommends universal design standards in public infrastructure and incentives for workplaces that establish childcare centres and adopt family-friendly policies.

Call to address gender-based violence

PETALING JAYA: The Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO) has urged the government to make gender-based violence response and childcare support key priorities in Budget 2026, calling for sustained funding to protect survivors and enable women’s economic participation.

Its executive director Nazreen Nizam said allocations must focus on sustaining shelters and crisis services, which often operate on short-term or inconsistent funding.

“Survivors need safe spaces, immediate protection and trauma-informed care.”

She added that a dedicated operational budget should cover essential costs, such as rent, meals, medical care, transport and staffing, to ensure 24-hour protection, especially for women and girls with disabilities so that they may seek help without fear of being turned away.

Nazreen said survivors continue to face barriers in seeking help, from inaccessible reporting systems to the lack of trained personnel in police stations, hospitals and courts.

“Budget 2026 should fund an inclusive design approach that strengthens reporting channels, trains frontliners in survivor-centred practices, and ensures interpreters, assistive technologies and safe digital platforms are available,”

She also said investments in counselling, legal aid and public awareness must complement crisis infrastructure.

“Ending gender-based violence requires a whole-of-government, gender-responsive budgeting approach that ensures every ringgit directly improves survivors’ lived realities through coordinated and accountable systems,” she said.

WAO advocacy manager Gandipan Gopalan said the Budget should also strengthen shelters’ capacity to operate 24-hour hotlines and emergency response services while upgrading facilities to meet safety, accessibility and confidentiality standards.

“Continuous training for enforcement and service frontliners is vital. Properly trained and sensitised personnel are key to ensuring survivors receive timely, compassionate and effective support,” he said.

He added that childcare support must remain a policy focus as it continues to limit women’s participation in the workforce.

“Childcare remains a key barrier for many women returning to work. Greater public investment and workplace childcare facilities are crucial to enabling women to participate meaningfully in the economy,” he said.

“If we must prioritise, WAO would focus on strengthening gender-based violence services and childcare support in today’s economy, particularly through better training for frontliners, such as police and One Stop Crisis Centre staff,” he added.

Society for Equality, Respect and Trust for All Sabah vice-president Robert Hii said effective budgeting must reflect women’s lived realities.

“What a national budget needs is the ability to listen to what women truly need and build communities of support that address their most pressing issues,.”

He also said a comprehensive, data-driven approach is needed to better capture the diverse experiences of women across regions and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The Gender Budget Group said progress on gender equality “is not catching up with the realities and needs of women today”.

The group’s memorandum calls for “bold and progressive acceleration” through dedicated national funding to strengthen frontline response systems and address emerging forms of gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated abuse. – BY **T.C. KHOR**

Funding issues of Indian Transformation Unit highlighted

BY **FAIZ RUZMAN**
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PETALING JAYA: A civil society group has warned that the Indian community risks being left behind if the Malaysian Indian Transformation Unit (Mitra) continues to be mired in funding delays and short-term welfare aid instead of long-term development.

Development of Human Resources for Rural Areas (DHRRA) said Mitra’s mandate to uplift the Indian community is being undermined by structural weaknesses, with nearly RM40 million in approved programme funds retracted this year and much of its annual allocation channelled to temporary relief.

DHRRA president Datuk Saravanan M. Sinapan said Mitra risks collapse unless its funding and structure are urgently reformed.

“Mitra continues to receive RM100 million annually, a figure unchanged for nearly a decade despite inflation and rising socioeconomic costs.

“This allocation is increasingly inadequate as Mitra remains the only structured fund dedicated specifically to Indian community development, apart from general aid, such as the Rahmah Cash Contribution,” he said in a statement yesterday.

Saravanan said by mid-2025, about RM40 million from Phase One programme approvals were retracted and replaced with new announcements, disrupting key initiatives in education, training and community empowerment.

“Such delays threaten the implementation of critical programmes and raise fears that unutilised funds may be returned to the treasury,” he said.

He added that between 40% and 50% of Mitra’s annual budget goes to short-term aid, such as dialysis support, student assistance and emergency relief.



Saravanan said the stagnant RM100 million budget must be reviewed and increased to fund high-impact, community-driven programmes. – ***BERNAMAPIC***

“While these initiatives are important, a welfare-centric model is unsustainable and fails to achieve long-term socioeconomic transformation without strategic reform,” he said.

DHRRA urged the government to redefine Mitra’s mandate by formalising it as a statutory body with clear legal authority and measurable targets, including reducing poverty and narrowing income gaps.

Saravanan said the stagnant RM100 million budget must be reviewed and raised to fund high-impact, community-driven programmes, such as capacity building, quality TVET, entrepreneurship support, SME grants and targeted scholarships in critical fields.

He called for district-level implementation in Indian-majority localities, regular public reporting on fund utilisation and stronger coordination with ministries such as education, finance and human resources.

“The Indian community placed its trust in the prime minister during GE15.

“However, concerns are growing that Mitra could one day be dissolved due to the lack of a long-term plan, with aid distributed in an on-and-off manner lacking continuity,” he said.

Saravanan added that DHRRA is appealing for the prime minister’s urgent intervention to safeguard Mitra’s role as a strategic agency for the Indian community’s long-term upliftment.

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SCAN ME

Government drafting new Bill to address cybercrime

Gap between existing laws and current realities impedes enforcement actions: Deputy minister

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is in the process of drafting a new Bill on cybercrime as part of efforts to curb online offences in the country, said Home Deputy Minister Datuk Seri Dr Shamsul Anuar Nasarah.

He said the gap between existing laws and the current realities of cybercrime has been identified as one of the most critical issues affecting the success of enforcement actions against syndicates involved in such activities.

He also said many legal provisions are deemed outdated or insufficiently stringent, especially in dealing with sophisticated fraud techniques, Bernama reported.

"More concerning is the absence of a comprehensive Act that specifically addresses cross-border cybercrimes, resulting in many cases being left unresolved or unprosecuted.

"The penalties imposed are sometimes too lenient and fail to serve as an effective deterrent to offenders or other syndicates," he said in the Dewan Rakyat.

He was responding to a question from Datuk Seri Doris Sophia Brodi (GPS–Sri Aman), who asked about the weaknesses in enforcement that have led to Malaysia being perceived as a preferred destination for international scam syndicates, including a recent case involving over 400 individuals detained in Bangsar South in the federal capital.

Shamsul Anuar said limitations in technical expertise and manpower among digital forensic and cyber enforcement teams also pose major challenges as many officers are not adequately equipped to deal with new technologies used by scammers, such as VPNs and encrypted communication platforms.

"The country's cyber monitoring and security infrastructure has yet to match that of developed nations, leading to slower and less comprehensive detection and response to digital threats," he said.

He added that the government has amended existing laws, such as the Penal Code, particularly on financial fraud involving mule accounts, by introducing new provisions, including Section 42D on offences related to the possession, control or use of ATM cards, credit cards and other payment instruments.

He said Malaysia's efforts to address cybercrime also involve regional collaboration.

"This year, police carried out four joint operations with Singapore, Indonesia and China, resulting in 45 arrests. This shows that such crimes are not confined within the country but have international links," he said.

Warden jailed for sexual assault of stepdaughter

KUALA TERENGGANU: A prison warden was sentenced to five years' jail and four strokes of the cane by the Sessions Court here yesterday after he was found guilty of committing physical sexual assault against his 14-year-old stepdaughter.

Judge Mohd Zul Zakiqudin Zulkifli handed down the sentence on the 42-year-old after the defence failed to raise a reasonable doubt at the close of its case.

The court imposed a four-year prison term for the offence under Section 14(d) of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 and an additional one year and four strokes of the cane for a supplementary charge under Section 16(1) of the same Act.

The prison sentences are to run consecutively, effective from the date of conviction, with the accused placed under police supervision for two years after the completion of the term. – Bernama



SEIZED SUBSTANCES ... Selangor police chief Datuk Shazeli Kahar (centre) at a press conference at the state police contingent headquarters yesterday, viewing confiscated items on display after police busted two drug trafficking syndicates in the Klang Valley. – ***BERNAMAPIC***

AGC rejects bid by Muhyiddin to drop corruption charges

KUALA LUMPUR: The Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) has rejected a representation submitted by former prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to drop seven charges that he is facing for abuse of power and receiving proceeds from unlawful activities.

DPP Datuk Wan Shaharuddin Wan Ladin informed the High Court of the development during yesterday's mention before judge K. Muniandy.

"The prosecution received the representation from the defence counsel on Aug 19. We have since notified the defence that the said representation was rejected by the AGC on Aug 22.

"In light of this, the prosecution applies for trial dates to be fixed," said Wan Shaharuddin, who is handling the case with DPP Mahadi Abdul Jumaat. He also informed the court that Muhyiddin's presence in court yesterday had been excused and the prosecution is ready to commence trial in January 2026 as the witness statements have been prepared.

However, Muhyiddin's lead counsel Datuk Hisyam Teh Poh Teik requested that trial dates be scheduled for May or June next year.

Another defence team member Datuk Amer Hamzah Arshad informed the court that although they have received the witness list, formal witness statements are still required to prepare their case.

The High Court set case management for Nov 10 and to fix the trial dates. The court also granted the defence's application to exempt Muhyiddin's personal appearance on that date.

Muhyiddin, 78, who was prime minister between 2020 and 2021, and is Bersatu president, is charged with four counts of abuse of power for allegedly soliciting RM232.5 million in bribes for the political party from Bukhary Equity Sdn Bhd, Nepturis Sdn Bhd, Mamfor Sdn Bhd and Datuk Azman Yusoff in connection with the Jana Wibawa project..

The charge is framed under Section 23(1) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009, which provides up to 20 years' jail and a minimum fine of five times the amount or value of the bribe or RM10,000, whichever is higher, upon conviction.

The Pagoh MP also faces three counts of receiving RM200 million in proceeds from unlawful activities from Bukhary Equity Sdn Bhd, deposited into Bersatu's Ambank and CIMB Bank accounts. – Bernama

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Thai court jails 'Red Shirts' leaders over 2010 unrest

Found guilty of violating state of emergency rules

BANGKOK: A Thai court jailed 11 former "Red Shirts" protest leaders yesterday over their role in 2010 anti-government demonstrations which culminated in an army crackdown that left scores dead.

The "Red Shirts", supporters of former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, were found guilty of violating state of emergency rules imposed during the protests, which sought to oust then-prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva.

Tens of thousands of Red Shirts protesters, known by the colour of their attire, took over key intersections in Bangkok in 2010, with some hunkering down in fortified protest camps and clashing with authorities.

The rallies followed Thaksin being found guilty of corruption, after he had already been ousted by a coup in 2006 and fled the country.

The 2010 protests shut down government complexes for more than two months, and ended when soldiers used live rounds to disperse demonstrators.

Human Rights Watch said at least 90 people were killed during the unrest, among Thailand's deadliest political episodes, and more than 2,000 were injured.

Bangkok's criminal court yesterday sentenced five protest leaders, including prominent activist Jatuporn Prompan, to four years and four months in prison, while six others received four-month sentences and two were acquitted, Jatuporn said.

"We respect the court's verdict," he said, adding that his legal team will request bail.

Authorities announced murder charges in 2012 against Abhisit and his deputy Suthep Thaugsuban over the deadly crackdown, but they were later acquitted.

A former chief of the Department of Special Investigations, Tarit Pengdit, who had sought to charge the pair, was instead prosecuted himself and sentenced to two years in prison for malfeasance in 2023.

The Red Shirts' patriarch, Thaksin, and his political dynasty have grappled with Thailand's pro-monarchy, pro-military establishment for two decades.

Thaksin is serving a one-year sentence in prison after the Supreme Court ruled that he improperly served a 2023 sentence in a hospital suite rather than a cell. – AFP



FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS ... Myanmar women light earthern lamps at Botahtaung Pagoda in Yangon to mark the full moon day of the Thadingyut festival, which is celebrated by Buddhists who light oil lamps, candles and incense at pagodas and decorate their houses and gardens with colourful paper lanterns. – ***AFPPIC***

'UN resolution only switched China representation'

TAIPEI: The UN resolution that led to Beijing assuming China's seat from Taipei was about switching representation and did not mention Taiwan, the EU said, commenting on an escalating dispute over the interpretation of the key document.

China says that 1971's UN resolution 2758, which led to Beijing taking over representing China from Taipei, gives international legal backing to its territorial claims over Taiwan, and reiterated that point in a long Foreign Ministry statement last week.

Taiwan says Beijing is trying to use its "misleading" interpretation of the resolution to create the legal basis for a future attempt to invade and take over the island.

Taiwan's formal name is the Republic of China, and it held on to China's UN seat post-1949, when its government fled to the island after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists, until the 1971 resolution was passed.

"United Nations Resolution 2758 is very short – only 150 words. And among those 150 words, the word 'Taiwan' does not appear," an EU spokesperson said in an emailed statement

"The resolution switched representation in the United Nations from the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek to the representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China," the spokesperson said, referring to Taiwan's then-leader.

China's Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

The comments also come after the US State Department said last week that China was intentionally mis-characterising and misusing the resolution as part of broader "coercive attempts to isolate Taiwan from the international community".

The EU spokesperson said: "As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has a special responsibility in upholding the rules-based international order, the UN Charter and international law.

"This includes the prohibition of the use of force and the maintenance of international peace and security."

No EU member state has formal ties with Taiwan, whose government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims.

But Taiwan has sought greater support from Europe, with its foreign minister visiting the continent twice last month.

Its President Lai Ching-te told a US radio show and podcast in a recent interview that President Donald Trump should get the Nobel Peace Prize should he be able to convince President Xi Jinping to abandon the use of force against Taiwan. – Reuters

Hun Sen rails against target shooting video

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's powerful former leader Hun Sen on Monday blasted a social media video of a man shooting at his image during a carnival in Thailand.

Territorial tensions spiralled in July into the deadliest military clashes between Cambodia and Thailand in decades, killing more than 40 people and forcing around 300,000 to flee their homes.

The two countries agreed to a ceasefire after five days of fighting and have since repeatedly traded accusations of truce violations.

On Monday, Hun Sen, who led Cambodia for nearly four decades until his son took over as prime minister in 2023, lambasted a video he said showed a "Thai national (who) displayed my photo to shoot at in order to win prizes".

In the video, which Hun Sen posted on social media alongside his statement, a man in a khaki uniform is seen raising an air rifle and firing at a paper target with the politician's portrait, inside a carnival booth with hanging plushie prizes.

The former premier urged Cambodians not to respond in kind, calling the carnival game, with "Wanted" written above his picture, "disgraceful" and "immoral behaviour".

"Please do not take any actions that would affect Thai companies or Thai citizens who are living and working in Cambodia," Hun Sen said.

"I still believe that the majority of Thai people do not want to be enemies of the Cambodian people."

But he also called on Cambodians who are "hurt by or unhappy with Thailand" to stop buying goods from the country and using Thai currency.

Cambodia banned imports of Thai fruit, vegetables and fuel earlier this year, while its neighbour restricted border crossings, but Cambodian officials had not previously called for a boycott.

Thai media reported in August on a fair in Thailand's southern Krabi province where patrons could shoot air guns at paper targets with Hun Sen's portrait, similar to the ones in the video shared by him on Monday. – AFP

BRIEFS

HANOI FLOODED AGAIN AFTER TORRENTIAL DOWNPOURS

HANOI: Torrential rains triggered by *Typhoon Matmo* flooded parts of Hanoi yesterday, the latest in a series of deluges that have inundated the Vietnamese capital over the past month as a run of storms has swept across the country's northern regions. Downpours flooded major roads, leaving motorcycles and cars stranded and forcing residents to wade through calf-deep water. Inner-city districts have been particularly affected, with drainage struggling to handle the volume of rain. Several schools in the capital closed or shifted to online teaching, while several flights from and to Noi Bai International Airport have been delayed or rescheduled. Last week, there was severe flooding in Hanoi due to *Typhoon Bualoi*, which killed at least 51 people in Vietnam and caused approximately US$600 million (RM2.5 billion) of damage. – Reuters

SINGAPORE TEACHERS AMONG MOST ACTIVE AI USERS

SINGAPORE: Teachers here rank among the world's most active users of artificial intelligence (AI), with 75% reporting that they use the technology to teach or support student learning, revealed a survey. In comparison, the global average stood at 36%, according to the Teaching and Learning International Survey 2024 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, which examined key aspects of the teaching profession to help countries review education policies. Teachers also reported tangible benefits from using AI, with about 82% stating that it helps them design or improve lesson plans, while 74% said it automates administrative tasks. The survey involved 3,500 teachers and principals across all 145 public secondary schools and 10 private schools. – Bernama

SINGER Since 1851

French court revisits shocking rape case

Defendant appeals conviction

NIMES: Frenchwoman Gisele Pelicot, whose ex-husband recruited dozens of strangers to rape and sexually assault her while drugged, attended court on Monday for an appeal by one man who insisted he "never intended" to rape her.

Fifty-one men, including her former husband Dominique Pelicot, were convicted after an initial months-long trial that ended in December last year and turned Gisele Pelicot into a global icon.

Husamettin Dogan, 44, is the only defendant to have filed an appeal and maintained it, prompting the fresh trial that started on Monday.

When asked by the chief judge whether he accepted the charge he was convicted of, Dogan said: "I am here because I never wanted to rape this lady, whom I respect."

During the initial trial, Gisele Pelicot, 72, waived her right to anonymity and her dignified conduct made her a feminist hero and a symbol of women's fight against male sexual violence.

On Monday, she arrived to applause at the court in the southern city of Nimes, accompanied by her son Florian – one of three children she had with Dominique Pelicot.

She shook hands with supporters, but did not make any statement. She is expected to give testimony today.

Dogan, who has arthritis and is not in custody, made a more discreet entrance.

Wearing a cap, face mask and dark glasses, he walked in using a walking stick, an AFP video journalist saw.

The appeal trial is scheduled to last a maximum of four days.

Dominique Pelicot will be brought from prison, where he remains in solitary confinement, for cross-examination. He is not appealing his 20-year prison sentence.

One of Gisele Pelicot's lawyers said that she would have been happy to forgo "this ordeal" but was not afraid of being put into the spotlight again.

"She understands the attention given to her case, which, beyond her own person, has universal significance," Antoine Camus said.

"It challenges us all to think about gender relations and men's relationship with their sexuality."

Over a nine-year period, Dominique Pelicot drugged his then wife to be raped and sexually abused by strangers while unconscious, mostly at home in the southern French town of Mazan.

In December, Dogan was sentenced to nine years in prison. But his incarceration was delayed for health reasons.

"I'm not a rapist," the 44-year-old construction worker said during the first trial.

On Monday, he told the court he only learnt after his arrest that Gisele Pelicot had been unconscious at the time he penetrated her.

The rest of Monday's hearing was taken up by experts giving their professional evaluation of Dogan, who was described as having an addiction to sex but knowing right from wrong.

Sixteen other men appealed their verdicts but later abandoned their bids. – AFP



Gisele Pelicot arrives for the appeal trial. – ***AFPPIC***

NZ foreign minister's home attacked by protester

WELLINGTON: A man has been charged after a window of the New Zealand foreign minister's home was smashed with a crowbar on Monday and a note pinned to his front door that said "welcome to the real world", the minister's spokesperson said yesterday.

The glass smashed all over Foreign Minister Winston Peters' dog, who was sleeping below the window, he said.

Peters has come under pressure from protest groups and opposition parties in recent days after he announced New Zealand would not be following Australia, Britain and Canada in recognising a Palestinian state amid the Israel-Gaza war. Protests have been held outside his Auckland home.

In a speech to the parliament yesterday discussing the second anniversary of the Oct 7, 2023, attack on Israel that triggered the conflict, Peters told the parliament that the violent targeting of private homes by some protesters was "a disgrace".

"It has caused distress to our families and disturbed the peace of our neighbours. Means such as these corrupt the protesters' ends, such as they are."

Peters on Monday said in a post on X that he was not home but both his partner and a guest were.

"This is truly gutless," it said. "When we have protesters, political bloggers and MPs alike encouraging this behaviour, posting politicians' home addresses online, and acting with pure ignorance and extremism, this is the result."

"All of New Zealand needs to be deeply concerned," the post said.

Auckland City District Commander, Superintendent Sunny Patel said that a 29-year-old man who was believed to be responsible for the damage had handed himself in to police on Monday and would appear in court on Friday.

"I know these occurrences have caused angst and frustration among residents. Police recognise the right to lawful protest, however we will not condone protest action where property is damaged," Patel said. – Reuters



Peters ... This is truly gutless . – ***REUTERSFILEPIC***

Remaining Everest trekkers evacuated

BEIJING: More than 200 remaining trekkers trapped by a snowstorm over the weekend near the eastern face of Mount Everest in Tibet are being evacuated, a source familiar with the situation said yesterday.

The evacuation should be completed by today, said the source, who was not authorised to speak to the media on the matter and declined to be identified.

The Tibetan regional government had no immediate comment on the evacuation.

Earlier, some 350 other hikers stranded by the blizzard in the remote valley of Karma in Tibet were guided to safety by local rescuers.

"We probably walked about 18-19km, mostly through heavy snow," said Eric Wen, 41, who made his way out of the valley on Sunday.

"Thankfully, some people ahead of us were breaking trail, leaving footprints we could follow – that made it a little easier. Otherwise, it would've been impossible for us to make it out on our own."

Wen and the other trekkers on his expedition team have since reached Lhasa, Tibet's capital, with the help of local authorities.

In western China, hundreds of hikers, including those in the Karma valley hoping to catch a glimpse of Everest's eastern Kangshung face, were caught off-guard by the sudden heavy snowfall.

In the Qilian Mountains on the border straddling western Qinghai and Gansu provinces, at least one trekker who was stranded in a gully by the snowstorms died, while 137 others were evacuated, Beijing News reported.

Further west in Xinjiang, authorities suspended hiking activities in Kanas, a lake district in the Altai Mountains, after roads turned dangerously icy and were blanketed with snow, Beijing News said. – Reuters

BRIEFS

EX-BANKER JAILED FOR STEALING GOLD

TOKYO: A court here sentenced a former employee at one of Japan's biggest banks to nine years in jail for repeatedly stealing gold bars and cash totalling nearly US$2.6 million (RM10.9 million), slamming her crimes as "heinous". Yukari Yamazaki, who worked for Mitsubishi UFJ and had a gambling addiction, began stealing after falling into debt due to currency trading and horse betting, according to a court ruling seen by AFP yesterday. Abusing her position and inside knowledge to "incapacitate the security system", Yamazaki purloined gold bars worth more than US$2.2 million and over ¥60 million (RM1.7 million) in cash, from safety deposit boxes at her bank in 2023 and 2024. Mitsubishi UFJ Bank has been able to retrieve only a portion of the amount she stole. – AFP

MEDICAL HELICOPTER CRASHES ON HIGHWAY

LOS ANGELES: A medical emergency helicopter crashed on Monday on a busy stretch of Highway 50 in the California city of Sacramento, injuring three, the air transport operator said, although there was no patient aboard. Survivors were taken to hospital to be treated, Sacramento Mayor Kevin McCarty said in a post on X, after the aircraft came down near the city's 59th Street on the eastbound side of the highway. "We are in the process of determining the details of this situation, as well as the condition of the crew involved, who were all taken to area hospitals," operator REACH told Reuters in an email. The company provides services for the critically ill and injured across the western United States.

No let-up in Israeli attacks

Negotiators discuss Trump plan

SHARM EL-SHEIKH: Israeli tanks, boats and jets pounded parts of Gaza yesterday, giving Palestinians no respite on the anniversary of the attack that led to two years of war and underlining the challenges at talks on President Donald Trump's plan to halt the conflict.

Israel pressed on with its offensive, residents said, after Hamas and Israel began indirect negotiations on Monday in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh on sensitive issues such as Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Hamas' disarmament.

The talks on the president's plan are widely seen as the most promising yet for ending a war that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and devastated Gaza since the Oct 7, 2023 attack.

Residents in Khan Younis in southern Gaza and Gaza City in the north reported heavy bombing from tanks and planes early yesterday, witnesses said. Israeli forces pounded several districts from the air, sea and ground, they said.

Gaza fighters fired rockets across the border early yesterday, setting off air raid sirens at Israeli kibbutz Netiv Haasara, and Israeli troops continued to tackle gunmen inside the enclave, the Israeli military said.

Marking the anniversary of the attack, an umbrella of Palestinian factions including Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and smaller groups vowed "the choice of resistance by all means is the sole and only way to confront the Zionist enemy".

"No one has the right to cede the weapons of the Palestinian people. This legitimate weapon ... will be passed through the Palestinian generations until their land and sacred sites are liberated," the statement issued in the name of "Factions of the Palestinian Resistance" said.

Israelis marking the second anniversary of the attack, in which 251 people were taken back to Gaza as hostages, gathered at some of the worst-hit sites of that day and at Tel Aviv's so-called Hostages Square.

"It's like an open wound, the hostages, I can't believe it's been two years and they are still not home," said Hilda Weisthal, 43. "I really hope that all the leaders will make a push and this war will end."

In Gaza, Mohammed Dib, 49, voiced similar hopes.

"It's been two years that we are living in fear, horror, displacement and destruction," he said. "We are hoping, with these new negotiations, to reach a ceasefire and a final end to the war."

Even if a deal is clinched during talks in Egypt, major questions will linger, including who will rule Gaza and rebuild it.

Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have ruled out any role for Hamas.

Though Trump says he wants a deal quickly, an official briefed on the negotiations, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he expected the round of talks that started on Monday would require at least a few days.

An official involved in ceasefire planning and a Palestinian source said Trump's 72-hour deadline for the hostages' return could be unachievable for dead hostages. Their remains may need to be located and recovered from scattered sites. – Reuters



A girl monitors a pot of water boiling over a fire in Khan Younis on Monday. – ***AFPPIC***

Final effort to salvage French Cabinet

PARIS: France's outgoing Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu made a last-ditch effort to rally cross-party support for a Cabinet lineup to pull his country out of political deadlock.

President Emmanuel Macron tasked Lecornu, 39, with forming a government in early September after parliament toppled his predecessor over an unpopular austerity budget.

Lecornu unveiled a new Cabinet on Sunday evening but it immediately drew criticism for containing many of the same faces from the previous government, and Lecornu resigned on Monday morning.

But in a twist, Lecornu had by Monday evening accepted Macron's request that he spend two days trying to salvage his administration.

Macron tasked Lecornu with "conducting final negotiations by Wednesday evening to define a platform of action and stability for the country", a presidential official said, asking not to be named.

The president was ready to "assume his responsibilities" in case of failure, the official said, appearing to allude to him calling new legislative elections.

Lecornu was to meet party leaders at the prime minister's office in an attempt to breach the impasse.

A political crisis has rocked France for over a year, after Macron called snap polls in mid-2024 which ended in a hung parliament.

The chaos comes ahead of 2027 presidential elections expected to be a historic crossroads in French politics, with the French far right under Marine Le Pen sensing its best chance yet of taking power.

Edouard Philippe, a former premier and centre-right contender, yesterday slammed what he called a "distressing political game".

He urged Macron to call early presidential elections. – AFP

Trio win Nobel Prize in Physics

STOCKHOLM: Scientists John Clarke, Michel Devoret and John Martinis won the 2025 Nobel Prize in Physics for "the discovery of macroscopic quantum mechanical tunnelling and energy quantisation in an electric circuit", the award-giving body said yesterday.

"This year's Nobel Prize in Physics has provided opportunities for developing the next generation of quantum technology, including quantum cryptography, quantum computers, and quantum sensors," the prize-awarding body said in a statement.

All three winners are based in the United States.

The Nobel physics prize is awarded by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and includes a prize sum totalling 11 million Swedish crowns (RM5 million) that is shared among the winners if there are several, as is often the case.

The Nobel Prizes were established through the will of Alfred Nobel, who amassed a fortune from his invention of dynamite. Since 1901, with occasional interruptions, the prizes have annually recognised achievements in science, literature, and peace. Economics was a later addition.

Physics was the first category mentioned in Nobel's will, likely reflecting the prominence of the field during his time. Today, the Nobel Prize in Physics remains widely regarded as the most prestigious award in the discipline.

Past winners of the Nobel physics prize include some of the most influential figures in the history of science, such as Albert Einstein, Pierre and Marie Curie, Max Planck and Niels Bohr, a pioneer of quantum theory.

Last year's prize was won by US scientist John Hopfield and British-Canadian Geoffrey Hinton for breakthroughs in machine learning that spurred the artificial intelligence boom, a development about which both have also expressed concerns.

In keeping with tradition, physics is the second Nobel to be awarded this week, after two American and one Japanese scientist won the medicine prize for breakthroughs in understanding the immune system. The chemistry prize is due today.

The science, literature and economics prizes are presented to the laureates by the Swedish king at a ceremony in Stockholm on Dec 10, the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death, followed by a lavish banquet at city hall.

The peace prize, which will be announced on Friday, is awarded in a separate ceremony in Oslo. – Reuters

Congo's stand-up comics take aim at war

BENI: Comedians in Congo are mining chronic instability for laughs, entertaining people displaced by war with their dark humour.

"Can you imagine Kabila as an emergency room doctor?" one comic said, setting up a joke about how former president Joseph Kabila's slow speaking style would mean some patients would die before they even got seen.

"Kabila as an emergency room doctor would sound like this: 'Thank you. Those with broken feet will be here, those with tibia problems will also be here ... I'll start again, I did say those with broken feet ... oh, they're already dead,'" he said, to roars from the audience.

The comedy show was before Kabila was sentenced to death in absentia for war crimes for his alleged role in backing the advance of M23. Kabila has denied wrongdoing and said the judiciary has been politicised.

In the crowd was Placide Itula, 28, who fled Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, in February, travelling more than 100km on a motorcycle taxi and boat to get to Beni.

Goma fell under the control of Rwanda-backed M23 rebels in late January.

Itula said he attended the comedy show "with the hope of reducing stress and anxiety and seeing if at least I can find a little smile when I see others".

Goma's fall was part of a lightning advance that saw M23 seize more territory than it has ever held and spurred fighting that killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands of others.

Rwanda has long denied backing M23 and says its forces act in self-defence. But a group of UN experts said in a report in July that Kigali exercised command and control over the rebels.

Christian Kabwe, who organises the comedy shows, said there was a need to "de-stress" the population.

"We told ourselves, as the French say, that laughter is therapeutic, so we wanted to offer this mass therapy," he said. – Reuters



Kabwe (left) and Merville Kanze perform a stand-up routine at Ishango Lodge in Beni bringing relief to soldiers, refugees and war-weary residents. – ***REUTERSPIC***

COMMENT by Dr Farzana Parveen Tajudeen

Promoting responsible AI usage

WHEN our first home computer arrived, it felt magical, like having a piece of the future in our living room, carefully covered and treated like treasure.

My elder brother guarded it seriously, warning me not to touch it because it was precious. Still, I would sneak over in his absence, daring to press a button or two, thrilled by the soft glow of the screen.

Over time, the once-admired machine became part of our everyday life. It was primarily used for essential tasks such as creating basic documents, sending emails and the occasional bit of online exploration.

I recall checking my secondary school exam results on the computer and being amazed at how instantly they appeared online compared to the long wait at the school notice board.

During my university years, not everyone had a personal computer or internet access at home, so many often visited browsing centres to conduct basic research and complete assignments.

That first taste of the internet at these centres felt endless, whether for academic work or simply browsing for fun.

By the time I reached my postgraduate years, the internet was no longer a novelty; it was a lifeline. I often wondered how scholars of earlier generations had completed their research without search engines, digital libraries or even laptops.

For me, research without these tools felt unimaginable. That was also the era when social media burst into our lives. On one hand, it offered opportunities to network, collaborate and share knowledge in ways previously impossible. On the other hand, it quietly consumed time and attention, tempting students away from focused study and reshaping how we engaged with learning.

Now, we find ourselves in the age of AI. When Generative AI (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT emerged, it felt groundbreaking. It could explain, assist and even inspire in ways that seemed almost unbelievable. The possibilities are enormous.

GenAI can break down complex topics for students, give voice to those struggling to express themselves, personalise learning and provide immediate guidance. It can boost productivity in workplaces, help researchers process vast amounts of information and open new creative avenues in writing, design and problem-solving.

But alongside this promise lies a growing concern. Students are becoming increasingly dependent on AI, using it not just as support but as a replacement for their own thinking. This makes it clear why comparisons with earlier innovations, such as computers and the internet, fall short. Those technologies extended human capability while AI goes further, challenging the very foundation of learning itself: the ability to think critically and independently.

> *"Students are becoming increasingly dependent on AI, using it not just as support but as a replacement for their own thinking. This makes it clear why comparisons with earlier innovations, such as computers and the internet, fall short.*



Beyond frameworks and guidelines, the culture around learning must shift so that students understand why critical thinking matters and why relying entirely on GenAI can diminish their growth. – ***BERNAMAPIC***

That is why regulating AI is crucial. Educators and policymakers are working to formulate strategies and guidelines for responsible AI use. It is easy to say "use AI for brainstorming but not for the entire project" or "AI should support, not replace". But in reality, these boundaries are hard to enforce, especially when deadlines approach, the polished reports produced by GenAI in seconds tempt students to bypass guidelines.

Knowing that detection tools are not accurate, many take advantage of this loophole. Beyond frameworks and guidelines, the culture around learning must shift so that students understand why critical thinking matters and why relying entirely on GenAI can diminish their growth.

As a technology advocate, I value innovation and encourage the use of GenAI but with caution, as it has the power to weaken human thinking skills.

The real challenge is not just in formulating regulations but also in promoting thoughtful usage so it sharpens rather than dulls our minds. Only by fostering a culture of thoughtfulness can AI remain a partner in growth, not a substitute for it.

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China's green technology: Boon or bane

"THIS 'climate change', it's the greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world, in my opinion." – US President Donald Trump's speech at the United Nations General Assembly on Sept 23.



Western commentators often point to what they claim to be the key, if not foundational, role that Western nations have played in setting up a new green-based world order. This is because the post-WWII international system has been dominated by institutions like the UN, World Bank and IMF, which were largely designed by Western powers.

Although not initially "green", these institutions have been the main vehicles through which global environmental and climate governance has developed.

It is also indisputable that the West is primarily responsible for the environmental and climate change challenges found in the world.

The development and dominance of the West was built on systems of exploitation of natural resources and raw materials following the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-19th century. This, in turn, ushered in the new era of colonialism, which exploited the land, natural resources and labour of the South in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Today, we have to deal with the aftermath of this continuing epoch of resource exploitation and environmental degradation, and its impact on ecosystems and human society.

These repercussions manifest as habitat destruction and air and water pollution while their global reach can be seen in climate change effects, including the rise in sea levels, the retreat of glaciers and ice caps, and increased natural disasters.

The West's progress and prosperity, built on carbon-intensive development and the unprecedented enhanced exploitation of other countries, means that they have a moral and historical obligation to lead the transition to a green order. But there is also no dispute that the transition to a truly "green world order" has to be a global collective effort that requires the full commitment of all nations, including the emerging economic powers.

West rebuffs China's green technology

Among global South countries considered pivotal to the emerging green world order, China stands out due to its status as the world's second-largest economy by nominal GDP and the largest by purchasing power parity – making it a key player in industry, trade and innovation.

It is undeniable that China is both a major contributor to global warming and a global leader in manufacturing and deploying green technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicles.

However, its positive contributions continue to be framed negatively or downplayed in the Western media and political discourse.

These are the geopolitical reasons why China's green technology contribution is not highlighted and appreciated:

- ***Strategic competition and rivalry:*** The overarching context is the US-China strategic competition, where technology leadership is viewed not only as an economic priority but also as a vital national security interest.
- ***Zero-sum game perception:*** The West, led by the US, often views technological dominance as a zero-sum game. If China leads in green tech, it means the West is falling behind. Acknowledging China's success is seen as conceding a critical strategic advantage in the industry of the future.
- ***Control over supply chains:*** Green technology is essential for energy independence. Relying on China for solar panels, batteries and critical minerals is seen as a vulnerability. Highlighting China's dominance underscores this dependency, which is a politically defeatist narrative for Western policymakers.
- ***National security threat:*** Chinese technology, particularly from companies like Huawei and DJI, is often labelled a security risk. This attempt to securitise technology taints the entire sector, making it difficult to separate legitimate security concerns from competitive economic advantages.
- ***'Overcapacity' narrative:*** The US and EU have accused China of creating "overcapacity" in green tech, arguing that massive state subsidies lead to overproduction. They claim this floods global markets with cheap products, unfairly undermining and bankrupting Western companies. This framing paints China not as a contributor but as a market disruptor, even though state policies that support industries have been pioneered by the West and continue to be ongoing.

China as alternative to Western model

What is also evident in the new green world order is that China's success challenges the Western ideological model.

- ***State capitalism vs free markets:*** China's model, which involves significant state planning, subsidies and support for national champions, is viewed as antithetical to the Western ideal of free-market competition, though the latter is only practised in rhetoric. Acknowledging that this model can produce world-leading, innovative technology would legitimise it, which is ideologically unpalatable to many Western leaders.
- ***The 'China threat' narrative:*** For decades, a powerful narrative has portrayed China as an authoritarian, and now existential threat. It is cognitively dissonant to simultaneously portray a country as a threat and a positive contributor to a global public good like climate change. The "threat" narrative is so deeply entrenched that it erases the "contributor" narrative.

Control of global media, narrative platforms

The institutions that shape global public opinion are largely Western-dominated.

- ***Agenda-setting by Western media:*** Major global news agencies, newspapers and broadcasters are based in the West. Their reporting reflects Western perspectives, priorities and geopolitical bias. Stories about China's green tech are often framed through the lens of job losses in the West, alleged intellectual property theft or overcapacity, rather than its net positive impact on climate change and global decarbonisation.
- ***Think-tanks and academia:*** While not monolithic, influential think-tanks in Washington D.C., Brussels and elsewhere are often funded by and focused on Western interests. Their reports and policy briefs emphasise the challenges and threats posed by China's rise, which filters into media and political discourse.

Conclusion

The under-highlighting of China's green technology contribution is not an oversight; it is an outcome of the current geopolitical landscape as defined by the West.

It is a classic case where objective facts (China's massive production and deployment of green tech) are filtered through a powerful subjective lens of strategic competition, ideological difference and narrative control.

For the West, acknowledging China's achievements in this critical field would mean conceding to a rival's superior strategy, legitimising a different governance model and admitting a loss of technological leadership.

All of these are politically unacceptable. Hence, the narrative focuses on the threat posed by China's green tech dominance rather than its contribution to the global struggle to ensure a more sustainable world through a new green world order.

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

LETTERS letters@thesundaily.com

Reaping from betrayal of trust

EVERY day, we read about scams and fraudsters cheating and swindling people out of their hard-earned savings. Often, these scammers and fraudsters are unknown to the victims.

Victims often receive random calls from scammers posing as police officers or court officials. Using fear and intimidation, the scammers pressure them into transferring money into unknown accounts.

Out of fear and confusion, victims make hasty decisions, only to lose their hard-earned savings. Meanwhile, the scammers disappear without a trace.

However, there is a different type of scam that has been going on for years but has never been reported. Fraudsters of this type of scam are known to the victims as they involve family members.

Grown children are known to have cheated or swindled their parents of their property or savings. These cases go unreported and the fraudsters get away scot-free. Two such cases came to light recently. It was reported that two single parents were betrayed by their children.

Dubbed as the worst nightmare for parents when children, who are supposed to protect them, end up cheating them. This is akin to the Malay proverb "*harapkan pagar, pagar makan padi*", meaning the one whom you trust betrays you.

TThe first case involved a 70-year-old woman whose son sold the house she was living in after her husband died.

He deceived her into signing the sale documents, claiming they were related to her late husband's pension. Trusting him, she signed the papers and lost her house.

When she had nowhere to go, her son refused to take her in. She now stays with her sister and does odd jobs to survive.

The other case involved a 75-year-old single father whose daughter, entrusted with managing his finances, drained his savings. He is now financially destitute.

These family fraudsters exploit the trust of illiterate elderly parents, financially abusing them. Many victims suffer in silence out of shame or a desire to protect their children. Some elderly victims are left heartbroken, with some experiencing mental decline or even succumbing to premature death.

It is tragic that certain children can be so heartless – betraying the trust, love and faith of their ageing parents by cheating them out of their property and savings. These family fraudsters are, in many ways, worse than strangers who scam.

Most elderly parents will not file a police report or alert the authorities against their children, allowing the perpetrators to escape accountability.

But what these children fail to realise is that actions have consequences – what goes around, comes around.

Samuel Yesuiah
Seremban



Despite ongoing crackdowns, illegal street racing stil persists. – ***SUNPIX***

Stop *Mat Rempit* menace using holistic approach

THE *Mat Rempit* issue continues to be a pressing social problem. Despite repeated enforcement actions by the authorities, illegal street racing and the accompanying social ills show no signs of disappearing.

This is not merely a law-and-order problem; it is also a reflection of deeper social challenges that require long-term solutions.

Enforcement must continue but we cannot rely on punitive measures alone. To find a lasting solution, several steps should be considered:

- **Holistic intervention:** Tackle the problem at its roots by understanding the socioeconomic backgrounds of these youths. Many *Mat Rempit* are school dropouts or unemployed, with limited opportunities for a better future.
- **Education and awareness:** Strengthen values-based education in schools and implement targeted campaigns on road safety and responsible behaviour to prevent young people from being drawn into the culture of illegal racing.
- **Community engagement:** Parents, community leaders, NGOs and youth groups must be actively involved in outreach programmes that provide mentorship, guidance and support.
- **Alternative channels:** Providing legal, safe and affordable spaces for motorsport enthusiasts – such as racing circuits and go-kart tracks – to channel their interest and passion positively.
- **Employment and skills training:** Create more opportunities for vocational training, apprenticeships and entrepreneurship to help these youths see a future beyond reckless street racing.
- **Rehabilitation and counselling:** Introduce rehabilitation programmes for those caught in illegal racing, with emphasis on counselling, character building and reintegration into society.

The *Mat Rempit* phenomenon is not just about illegal racing; it represents a cry for help from a section of our youths who feel left out or disillusioned.

If we continue to respond only with enforcement, the problem will persist. A more comprehensive, human-centred approach is urgently needed to turn these young lives around – for their sake and the safety of society.

Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye
Chairman
Alliance for a Safe Community

ICAEW urges ethical reporting

Vague commitments and inconsistent disclosures can be seen as greenwashing

PETALING JAYA: Sustainability reporting in Asean is reaching a pivotal moment, driven by tightening regulations and growing investor demands.

Frameworks such as the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) are increasingly setting the standard for ESG disclosures worldwide. Yet many businesses in the region, especially those embedded in supply chains, are still grappling with how to keep pace with shifting expectations.

Under growing scrutiny, vague commitments and inconsistent disclosures can be seen as greenwashing – eroding public trust and undermining investor confidence.

To move from intent to impact, companies must do more than comply.

For ESG to drive lasting value, ethical leadership, transparency, and robust governance are essential.

Ellie Wild (***pic***), a member of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) and sustainability manager at Forvis Mazars, believes high-quality sustainability reporting starts with a strong ethical foundation – one that empowers professionals to identify, assess, and communicate risks with integrity.

"Balanced reporting is at the crux of building trust. Companies must avoid the temptation to report only ESG opportunities, or to exaggerate their ESG maturity," she said.



"Stakeholders expect a mixed picture, and the best way to build trust is transparent reporting of both current position and future goals."

"ESG information should be subject to the same rigour as financial information. Regulatory frameworks contribute to fortifying the ESG control environment by mandating granular disclosure on governance and risk management processes.

"We are also seeing a critical shift towards assurance over ESG information. In some jurisdictions this is voluntary, while in others, such as Malaysia and Singapore, regulators have signalled a phased move toward mandatory assurance, with details currently under consultation."

While global frameworks offer consistency, Asean jurisdictions differ widely in how they interpret and implement ESG reporting.

Some, like Malaysia, have taken bold steps to lead, including its National Sustainability Reporting Framework, aligning directly with ISSB's IFRS S1 and S2.

The framework introduces a phased rollout prioritising climate, with deferred Scope 3 disclosures aligned to Malaysia's readiness.

This momentum has not gone unnoticed.

Malaysia is currently the only Asean jurisdiction formally recognised by the IFRS Foundation for adopting ISSB standards with limited transition. Its regulatory leadership and regional influence make it a fitting host for the upcoming ICAEW Asean Sustainability Summit in November 2025 at the Securities Commission of Malaysia.

Taking place under the theme Asean Rising: The Net Zero Playbook, the summit aligns with Malaysia's Asean 2025 Chairmanship focus on "Inclusivity and Sustainability" and will spotlight regional action on ethical governance, transparent reporting, sustainable finance, and climate resilience.

"The greatest challenge is creating structured processes for managing sustainability risks," according to Wild.

"ISSB requires companies to show how sustainability is integrated into strategy and governance. Those treating it as peripheral will struggle. Finance and risk teams should be trained in sustainability frameworks so they can embed accountability into processes and oversee risk management effectively. For SMEs, tools such as carbon calculators help ease the reporting burden by keeping emission factors up to date."

Even in relatively mature markets, many companies still grapple with overlapping regulations, evolving standards, and capacity constraints. To address these gaps, the Asean Sustainability Reporting Advocacy Collaborative (ASRAC) encourages jurisdictions to adopt ISSB as a global foundation while using a "building-blocks" approach that accommodates local policy objectives.

ASRAC also advocates for proportionality and scalability so that ESG reporting remains feasible for the SMEs that populate the large majority of businesses across the region.

To support companies across the spectrum, the Asean Simplified ESG Disclosure Guide (ASEDG) combines ISSB, GRI, and local frameworks into 38 disclosures suited to different maturity levels.

Complementing this, Capital Markets Malaysia also recently launched a greenhouse gas emissions calculator to help businesses measure Scope 1 and 2 emissions and make ESG reporting more practical.

ICAEW supports governance by equipping professionals with training, practical tools, and governance audits that strengthen internal ESG systems. It also promotes international best practices and collaborates with stakeholders across ASEAN to embed ethics into the heart of sustainability disclosures.

The ICAEW Asean Sustainability Summit will also create a springboard for long-term regional cooperation.

Taking place on Nov 4 and 5, 2025 at the Securities Commission Malaysia and virtually, the summit aims to accelerate regional alignment and capacity-building in sustainability reporting.

With Asean moving toward greater convergence, it presents an opportunity to align ambition with implementation, especially through practical guidance, peer learning, and scalable tools that can support businesses at every stage of their ESG journey.

For sustainability to advance meaningfully in Asean, frameworks must be underpinned by something deeper: trust, transparency, and ethical leadership.

Vantive, NKF collaborate to recycle dialysis bags

PETALING JAYA: Vantive Malaysia, a newly independent healthcare company focused on vital organ therapies, has partnered with the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia (NKF) on an innovative recycling initiative that upscales the reuse of peritoneal dialysis (PD) bags into sustainable and functional items.

As part of this meaningful collaboration, Vantive first contributed upcycled tote bags made from PD bags, and has now expanded the initiative to include 1,000 medication pouches.

By giving PD bags a second life, the project helps reduce unnecessary landfill waste while providing practical items that directly benefit kidney patients.

This initiative also expands the Jom Recycle Programme, reinforcing Vantive's vision of promoting a greener healthcare ecosystem.

By transforming recycled materials into patient-benefiting products, the program raises awareness of recycling while addressing community healthcare needs.

Country head Christine Ng said: "At Vantive, our mission is extending lives and expanding possibilities. We are committed to building a more sustainable healthcare ecosystem. This project with NKF demonstrates how innovation and collaboration can transform waste into something meaningful – by supporting PD patients to perform dialysis at home and at the same time raising awareness on recyclable PD bags."

NKF CEO Choo Kok Ming said: "We are deeply grateful to Vantive for this thoughtful initiative. These upcycled tote bags and the 1,000 medication pouches are more than just functional items – they reflect creativity, care, and commitment to sustainability. Together, we are showing that small changes can create lasting impact for both patients and the environment."

In addition, the upcycled products will be made available for purchase through NKF's official website at www.nkf.org.my.



(from left): Vantive Malaysia government affairs manager Anand Kaur; Ng; Choo and Vantive Malaysia market development manager Chan Tzi Ling at the handover ceremony of 1,000 upcycled medication pouches under the Jom Recycle Programme recently.

Funds raised from sales will be channelled to support NKF's subsidies for its patients, further extending the impact of this collaboration.

Through this collaboration, Vantive and NKF aim to inspire more partners, patients, and the public to embrace small but impactful actions – because every recycled item contributes to a healthier planet and a more caring society.

Asean to launch green transition centre for MSMEs

KUALA LUMPUR: Asean will launch the Centre of Excellence (CoE) for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in green transition at the upcoming Asean Summit this month.

The CoE is a key Priority Economic Deliverable (PED) under Malaysia's Asean 2025 Chairmanship, given that MSMEs are the backbone of the regional economy, making them a vital part in the transition to an environmentally sustainable and low-carbon economy.

Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry's (Miti) Asean Economic Integration Division senior director Dr Sugumari Suppiah said the CoE is part of the region's broader effort to embed MSME empowerment, sustainability and digitalisation into economic integration priorities.

"Whatever PEDs we develop, we take into account the business interests, especially the MSMEs which account for 97% of Asean enterprises," she told Bernama on the sidelines of the 57th Asean Economic Ministers' (AEM) Meeting and Related Meetings recently.

She added that Malaysia is also pushing for MSME inclusion in broader trade agreements, including the Asean-India trade upgrade.

"Even in free trade agreements (for example), we have chapters that address MSMEs," she said.

Sugumari is optimistic that all Asean member countries will reach a consensus and deliver all 18 PEDs by the end of the year, despite the challenges in completing several key initiatives.

She said the PEDs are structured around four strategic thrusts, namely trade and investment integration; digitalisation; sustainability; and inclusivity, adding that these were formulated after extensive stakeholder consultations across Asean.

"These are not ideas we just pulled out of thin air. We discussed and carefully considered the challenges facing Asean, and we hope that the PEDs will be achieved," she said.

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'Malaysia faces year of economic restraint in 2026'

World Bank cites pressure on development expenditure amid fiscal consolidation, outlines three main factors weighing on growth trajectory

BY **JOHN GILBERT**
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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's development expenditure is projected to decline to 4.1% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2025, down from 4.4% last year, signalling a shift that could challenge the nation's long-term growth ambitions.

World Bank Goup lead economist for Malaysia Dr Apurva Sanghi said this marks a broader trend, whereby average annual development spending is expected to fall to 3.3% of GDP under the 13th Malaysia Plan compared to 4.4% under the 12th Malaysia Plan.

"While fiscal consolidation is necessary, it must be done judiciously. Cutting development expenditure may provide short-term relief, but if not balanced with strategic investments, it risks constraining Malaysia's long-term growth potential," Apurva told reporters in a briefing yesterday.

The World Bank also unveiled a report titled "From Bytes to Benefits: Digital Transformation as a Catalyst for Public Sector Productivity" yesterday.

Apurva said while the government has benefited from higher revenues and reduced subsidy commitments, these gains have been partially offset by reduced allocations for development and increasing debt burdens.

He also highlighted that Malaysia's debt-to-GDP ratio has grown to 64%, a level that raises concerns about fiscal headroom.

While net new debt issuance slightly decreased last year, the cost of servicing debt is rising steadily.

"For every RM100 collected in revenue, RM16 now goes to interest payments. This is a sharp increase from less than RM10 a decade ago. Such rising interest obligations crowd out space for crucial development spending," Apurva said.

He said this fiscal dynamic underscores the delicate balancing act policymakers must perform: sustaining investments in infrastructure, education, and innovation while also maintaining fiscal discipline.

Further, Apurva emphasised the importance of targeted and intelligent spending adjustments. "All spending cuts are not created equal. Malaysia needs to protect and prioritise development investments that yield long-term returns, especially during economic transitions."

Following Malaysia's shift towards fiscal tightening and reduced development expenditure, the World Bank projects that the domestic economic outlook for 2026 will remain subdued, with GDP growth forecast to hold steady at 4.1%, mirroring 2025 levels.

"We expect no acceleration in growth next year. The momentum that supported this year's performance is slowing, and 2026 will be a year of economic restraint," Apurva said, outlining three primary factors weighing on Malaysia's growth trajectory.

He said the international environment remains soft, with global and regional growth decelerating, and Malaysia's export-oriented sectors are feeling the drag.

The World Bank also forecasts export growth to remain flat at 2.9%, while import growth is expected to slow from 4.5% in 2025 to 3.7% in 2026.

Apurva said that while domestic demand has been a key pillar of Malaysia's recent economic resilience, its contribution is expected to taper in 2026. "Domestic demand was the main engine of growth in 2025. But that engine is now throttling down."

The World Bank projects domestic demand growth to slow from 5.2% this year to 4.7% in 2026. Private consumption, the largest component of domestic demand, is expected to remain largely flat year-over-year.

"We do see continued support from consumption, but not at the same pace. The boost from pent-up demand and earlier policy support is waning," Apurva said.

Touching on tariffs, he said while the outcome of US-Malaysia trade negotiations remains uncertain, early signs suggest room for optimism.

Tariffs on Malaysian goods entering the US were recently reduced from an initially proposed 24% to 19%, indicating a potential shift in constructive dialogue between the two sides. "There is clearly an appetite on both ends to move forward in negotiations," Apurva said.

However, he said Malaysia's competitive position is still vulnerable, with nearly 60% of goods Malaysia exports to the US – now subject to the 19% tariff – are also exported by countries facing lower duties.

This puts Malaysian exports at a relative disadvantage.

Particularly vulnerable is the electrical and electronics (E&E) sector, which has long been a key pillar of the nation's economy.

Tariffs aren't the only concern, Apurva said. Rules of origin and transhipment policies, still unannounced, add to the uncertainty. Any tightening of origin rules could disrupt Malaysia's supply chains.

Beyond policy risks, structural weaknesses pose a threat to the E&E sector's long-term competitiveness.

While Malaysia has benefited from trade relocation out of China, countries such as Vietnam and Thailand have gained even more.

"The smaller gains Malaysia sees from US tariffs on China are a reflection of deeper structural challenges," Apurva explained.

One of those challenges is Malaysia's declining share in advanced integrated circuits, especially artificial intelligence-related chips.

Other headwinds include low R&D investment and limited domestic innovation. Malaysia's median R&D-to-sales ratio lags behind that of Taiwan and China, and only 13–18% of patents granted locally are awarded to Malaysians.

As 2026 approaches, the broader outlook remains cautious. Growth is projected to stay flat, supported moderately by domestic demand – but with diminishing contributions from its key drivers, particularly private consumption and investment, said Apurva.

Berjaya Food sponsors WE2025 to empower women in trade, investment

BY **DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM**
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KUALA LUMPUR: Berjaya Food Bhd (BFood) has been unveiled as a key corporate partner for the Women Entrepreneurs (WE2025) initiative, underscoring the group's commitment to diversity, inclusivity and the advancement of women in business.

At the sponsorship, partnerships and community initiatives announcement yesterday, WE2025 project director Michelle Lau said BFood's support signals a strong vote of confidence in the forum's mission to open new pathways for women in trade, investment, leadership and economic participation.

"We are honoured to have Berjaya Food on board as a key sponsor of WE2025. Their commitment to inclusivity and community building mirrors our own values and goals," she said in her speech.

Lau noted that BFood's contribution extends beyond financial sponsorship, highlighting its track record in driving meaningful corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes across the country. "The company has consistently demonstrated leadership in community initiatives, from sustainability to youth empowerment, and now in championing women entrepreneurs," she said.

Lau emphasised that the partnership is more than symbolic, describing it as a practical collaboration aimed at scaling opportunities for women-led businesses.

"With Berjaya Food's support, WE2025 will be able to amplify our efforts in building platforms that empower women to participate more meaningfully in trade and investment. We are creating an ecosystem where women are not only included but can thrive as leaders and innovators," she said.

Lau told reporters later that inclusivity remains central to the initiative's design. "It is not just about convening women entrepreneurs, but about ensuring that the business community, policymakers and corporate partners all come together to drive impact. Partnerships like this one with Berjaya Food give us the resources and credibility to make that possible."

The WE2025 forum will be held on Nov 25-27 at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre in Kuala Lumpur. It is expected to bring together more than 2,000 delegates from across the region, including government leaders, corporate executives, investors, academics and grassroots entrepreneurs.

According to Lau, the agenda will feature plenary discussions, trade showcases, networking platforms and targeted capacity-building programmes designed to unlock opportunities for women-led enterprises.

"WE2025 is not just an event. It is a movement to reshape the narrative around women in business and to chart a roadmap for long-term progress. Our goal is to catalyse systemic change that outlives the forum itself," she said.



From left: Lau, Qube Integrated Malaysia managing director Jessie Tan, Berjaya Food chief financial officer Louise Chin and Berjaya Starbucks Coffee Company director of marketing and loyalty Zakiah Hanim displaying the commemorative branded tumbler with the WE2025 logo designed for the forum to be held next month.

The sponsorship framework, spearheaded by BFood, will be complemented by other strategic partners and community-driven collaborations in the coming months.

Lau stressed that the initiative aims to leave a lasting legacy. "We want to see tangible results, more women-owned businesses gaining market access, more investment flowing into women-led ventures and more role models inspiring the next generation."

Asked about future collaborations, she noted that WE2025 will continue to expand its partnership base. "This is only the beginning. Berjaya Food's leadership sets the tone and we are in talks with other organisations that share our vision. The more partners we bring in, the stronger the impact we can create," Lau told reporters.

The sponsorship reflects BFood's growing profile as a corporate leader in social responsibility and inclusivity. The group, best known for its Starbucks and Kenny Rogers Roasters franchises, has in recent years invested in initiatives ranging from environmental sustainability to community outreach programmes.

By aligning with WE2025, BFood is positioning itself not only as a commercial player but also as a catalyst for broader societal change, said Lau. "When companies like Berjaya Food step forward, it sends a powerful message that business can and should be a force for good."

Lau concluded by reiterating the importance of collaboration. "No single organisation can achieve this vision alone. It takes the combined efforts of businesses, governments, civil society and communities to create the kind of ecosystem where women can excel. Partnerships like this one are the cornerstone of that journey.

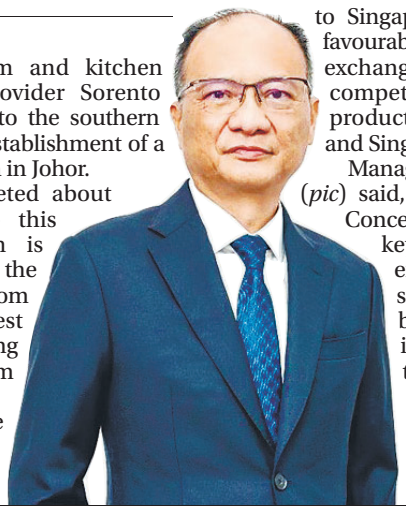
She expressed confidence that the Berjaya Food-WE2025 partnership will inspire more corporations to align their CSR commitments with empowerment and inclusivity goals.

"As we move forward, we are building not just for the present, but for the generations to come. Together, we can create a future where women entrepreneurs are recognised, supported and celebrated as drivers of economic growth," Lau said.

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Sorento Capital to enhance presence in southern region

Bathroom and kitchen sanitary ware company plans RM2.5 million flagship showroom in Johor



PETALING JAYA: Bathroom and kitchen sanitary ware solutions provider Sorento Capital Bhd is expanding into the southern region of Malaysia with the establishment of a "Sorento Concept" showroom in Johor.

The company has budgeted about RM2.5 million to develop this flagship showroom, which is scheduled for completion by the end of this year. The showroom will showcase Sorento's latest product innovations, including the upcoming premium "Sorento Serene" series.

With the launch of the "Sorento Serene" series, Sorento is strengthening its reach in the premium segment.

Johor has been identified as a strategic growth market for Sorento, supported by government-led initiatives such as the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) and the Johor Bahru-Singapore Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link.

In addition, Johor's close proximity to Singapore, combined with the favourable ringgit-Singapore dollar exchange rate, enhances the competitiveness of Sorento's product offerings for Malaysian and Singaporean consumers.

Managing director Loo Chai Lai (*pic*) said, "The launch of Sorento Concept showroom in Johor is a key milestone in our expansion journey. This showroom will allow us to better serve our customers in Johor while tapping into the Singaporean market.

"With the region's rapid growth in property development and infrastructure, we are confident that Sorento is well-positioned to capture rising demand for quality bathroom and kitchen solutions."

The showroom will serve as a platform to strengthen engagement with dealers, property developers, interior designers and architects.

Loo said they are also investing in brand visibility through upgraded dealer stores, targeted advertising and high-impact billboards, in line with their ambition to build Sorento as a trusted Malaysian brand.

For the financial year ended June 30, 2025 (FY25), Sorento Capital reported revenue of RM179.2 million, an increase of 18.3% from RM151.5 million in FY24, while net profit rose 7.4% to RM26.2 million from RM24.4 million in FY24.

Excluding one-off listing expenses of RM3.1 million, adjusted net profit would have been RM29.3 million. Growth was driven by stronger contributions from both dealer and project-based sales.

"Our results reflect strong fundamentals and the growing demand for Sorento products. With a clear strategy and solid foundation, we are confident of sustaining growth while creating long-term value for our shareholders," Loo said.

S Korea's SG Entertech eyes SE Asia expansion, seeks local partners

KUALA LUMPUR: South Korea's SG Entertech Co Ltd, the innovative virtual reality (VR) solutions provider of the Snack VR platform, has announced plans to expand into Southeast Asia and is seeking local agents, distributors, and partners to build a regional network.

SG Entertech in a statement said it seeks collaborations with local tourism operators, museums, schools, shopping malls, retail chains, and public institutions to introduce its compact, unmanned Kiosk Snack VR to a wider audience.

"Our next phase of growth depends on collaborating with strong local partners, and SG Entertech is now accepting partnership enquiries for Southeast Asia expansion," said its chief operating officer, Kook Sun Pyo.

The company is looking for regional distribution partners that include technology distributors and entertainment equipment suppliers seeking innovative products; tourism industry collaborators such as hotel chains or resort operators; educational sector partners like universities or international schools; and retail and entertainment agents, as well as government partners.

VR contents will feature a VR Postcard Mailbox that lets visitors capture their travel memories and instantly share them as digital postcards. By combining destination promotion with personalised souvenirs, it helps governments and tourism boards make an impression on international travellers.

In addition, the Painting VR Art Experience is an educational and cultural programme that connects users with Southeast Asian artists whereby participants can create digital paintings in VR guided by local masters.



SG Entertech seeks collaborations with tourism operators, museums, schools, shopping malls, retail chains and public institutions to introduce its compact, unmanned Kiosk Snack VR to a wider audience. – ***SG ENTERTECHPIC/BERNAMA***

Furthermore, Gunfighting VR offers an immersive Wild West shooting game that tests reflexes and accuracy, while Destiny Battle is a fantasy-themed player-versus-player VR game that is suitable for e-sports arenas and festivals, offering an exciting platform for interactive competition.

Companies seeking cutting-edge solutions are invited to meet SG Entertech at the Hong Kong Electronics Fair (Autumn Edition) this month, where the forefront of innovation will be showcased. – Bernama

EPF starts auto registration for non-Malaysian workers

PETALING JAYA: The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) has announced that from this month, non-Malaysian citizen employees holding a Visitor's Pass (Temporary Employment) or an Employment Pass will be registered as members automatically.

This eliminates the need for employees to visit EPF offices for registration as employers may verify their employees' registration details online through i-Akaun (Employer).

For holders of other types of passes, registration and record updates can continue to be carried out at EPF offices nationwide as usual.

Employers involved have been notified of this new process through notice letters sent beginning Sept 20. They are required to schedule an appointment via the URL link provided in the notice letter to register employees who were not successfully registered automatically, as well as to update information and verify thumbprints for employees who have been successfully registered.

For employees who have been successfully registered, employers may proceed with contribution payments using the EPF number provided.

EPF said employers are responsible for ensuring that accurate monthly contributions are deducted from employees' wages and remitted to the EPF on or before the 15th of each month. For example, wages for October 2025, which correspond to the contribution month of November 2025, must be paid on or before Nov 15, 2025.

Overall, there are six key focus areas for employers under the implementation of this new policy:

- Register as an EPF employer. Companies that are not yet registered with the EPF must do so beginning Oct 1.
- Register employees as EPF members. Employers must register and make contributions for their employees starting Oct 1.
- Pay contributions. Both employer and employee are required to contribute 2% each of the employee's wages. Contributions must be paid to the EPF on or before the 15th of each month.
- Maintain payroll record. Employers must update and maintain employees' payroll records for EPF inspection purposes.
- Update records. Employers must update information such as contact details, changes in company name, or company status.The EPF must be notified in the event of cessation of business operations or termination of all employees.
- Provide guidance on the withdrawal process. Employers should advise employees to apply for the Leaving the Country Withdrawal within two months before their work permit expires.Employers must ensure all supporting documents for eligible withdrawals are duly verified, complete, and in proper order.

Malaysia's worker productivity up 2.4% in 2024

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's worker productivity increased by 2.4% in 2024, with value added per worker amounting to RM99,265 compared to RM96,914 in the previous year, according to the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (Miti).

Deputy Minister Liew Chin Tong said the rate was calculated based on the value of gross domestic product (GDP) divided by the number of current workers aged between 15 and 64.

"The country's worker productivity continues to show improvement, in line with the government's efforts to transform the manufacturing sector through the adoption of the latest technology and automation," he said during a question-and-answer session in Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He said this in response to a question from Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari (PH-Gombak) regarding the latest productivity level of Malaysian workers and the ministry's strategy to encourage companies and employers to invest in new technologies to boost productivity.

Liew said the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 (NIMP 2030) represents the government's commitment to making the manufacturing sector more productive through investment in new technologies, including the target of establishing 3,000 smart factories by 2030.

"The 13th Malaysia Plan also sets a target to reduce the ratio of foreign workers to the total workforce from 15% to 10%," he said. – Bernama

Capital A taps Ant's AI tool to enhance FX risk management

Partnership helps AirAsia cut currency hedging costs by 40% and achieve 90% cashflow forecasting accuracy

KUALA LUMPUR: Capital A has partnered with Ant International to optimise treasury operations and enhance customer experience for its airline business AirAsia.

By leveraging Ant International's proprietary Falcon Time-Series Transformer (TST) Model, Capital A was able to better manage AirAsia's cash flows across multiple currencies and in turn, offer more stable, competitive pricing to its customers.

This was enabled by Falcon, which enhanced AirAsia's foreign exchange (FX) risk management and reduced its hedging costs by up to 40%, allowing the airline to pass the cost savings on to customers through more competitive FX rates.

The integration also resulted in a more future-proof and scalable treasury management solution for AirAsia, with 90% accuracy in forecasting the company's cashflow and FX exposure on an hourly, daily and weekly basis.

This integration marks the first industry-tailored solution that Ant International has developed from Falcon. Following the launch in April, Ant applied the large data model to various treasury management scenarios to design solutions for specialised industries, such as airlines. The model was trained on 2 billion parameters, including 80 million parameters of travel-related data, such as open-sourced data from OTAs and air carriers. This enabled Ant to launch an AI FX offering catered to the airline industry.

The solution was then integrated with Capital A's corporate banking partner's fixed FX rate infrastructure to complete transactions for AirAsia. Ant International estimates that in time, the enhanced solution could help the broader airline industry reduce its overall FX costs by as much as 60% for selected currency pairs.

BigPay Group CEO Aireen Omar said: "As a group, we serve over 70 million travellers yearly, 35 million AirAsia Rewards members and our fintech arm BigPay has over 1.6 million carded users. Through our partnership with Ant International, we are able to reduce the hedging cost by 40%. This helps us immensely as Capital A processes massive multicurrency volumes every day and this platform updates FX rates twice daily and provides great margin management capability."

Meanwhile Ant International general manager of platform tech Kelvin Li said: "Our partnership with Capital A marks the first commercial deployment of Falcon, an important milestone in our journey to transform treasury and FX management for businesses. The results demonstrate how innovation, technology and institutional-grade execution solve real-world FX challenges and reshape cross-border payments. We look forward to serving more businesses and industries as we continue to build on our enterprise embedded finance solutions."

With airline travel set to continue growing to 5.2 billion passengers this year as estimated by IATA, Capital A and Ant International recognise the need for enhanced solutions that will allow the industry to improve their FX risk management and lower costs, by leveraging AI. Both sides will continue to explore more efficient and transparent global fund management solutions via Ant International's Bettr Treasury Platform.

Target of RM150m potential exports from Level Up KL 2025

KUALA LUMPUR: The government, through the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), is targeting RM150 million in export opportunities under this year's Level up KL 2025, Southeast Asia's premier game developers conference.

Held from Oct 6-8, the event is expected to facilitate 350 business meetings and feature 70 exhibitors from around the world, Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo said at the opening ceremony.

He said more than 2,500 participants from over 20 countries including Japan, the US, the UK, Brazil, Indonesia, the Philippines and Saudi Arabia are attending the event.

"Our digital infrastructure is advancing rapidly. With nationwide 5G coverage, developers now have access to high-speed, low-latency environments required for multiplayer, cloud-based, and real-time games.

"This opens new frontiers for immersive and socially connected experiences," he said.

However, Gobind stressed that infrastructure alone is not enough but must be matched with talent and supportive policies.

The government has, therefore, through MDEC, launched incentive programmes worth RM15 million to boost local digital content such as games, animation, and creative technology to help studios create original internet protocol, scale production to compete globally, he said.

"Among these is the Digital Games Testbed Programme with a RM3.5 million allocation to help Malaysian studios create new game genres and work with international partners." – Bernama

Malaysia needs three key factors to succeed as wealth hub: Juwai IQI

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's generous package of tax incentives designed to woo single-family offices could deliver RM10.7 billion of economic benefits, but incentives alone are insufficient. Malaysia needs to match the incentives with action in three key areas of policy stability, credibility, and ecosystem.

Juwai IQI global wealth office expert Haroon Anwar said, "Malaysia can succeed as an accessible base for smaller and newer family offices, mostly from South Asia and Southeast Asia. This is what you'll start to see over the next few years: new infrastructure announced to improve connectivity and lifestyle options in Forest City, new banking regulations and tax laws to address the issues of most relevance to family offices, a new visa for expert financial professionals, and ambassadors for Malaysia's financial system who spread the word about the opportunities offered here.

For those not in finance, SFO stands for single-family office. Family offices are the companies that wealthy families create to manage their money and investments.

Haroon said the reason Malaysia sees an opportunity is that, over the next decade, family offices will go through an unprecedented generational transition. By 2035, 40% of all family offices operating today will have handed their money down from one generation to the next.

"That's not all. In the next five years, the number of Asian SFOs is expected to surge. Their numbers will climb by 40%, from 2,290 in 2024 to 3,200, and many of them will have just the right level of assets to be attracted to Malaysia," he added.

The economic benefits of attracting family offices are huge. The RM10.7 billion in additional economic growth will be delivered in part because every family office that sets up in Malaysia will be required to have a local team and spend RM500,000 in the local economy," he added.

"Malaysia's value advantage starts with a lower minimum asset standard of RM30 million. While that's significant, it's small by global family office standards, he said, adding that the third and probably most important element of Malaysia's value advantage is the blanket 0% tax rate for up to 20 years, as well as one-off stamp-duty and CGT relief.

He said Malaysia must make improvements in these three key areas if its family office strategy is to succeed.

"First is regulation and policy stability. Because such large sums are at stake, and family offices exist to preserve wealth across generations, we need to provide clear rules on tax and succession. Malaysia must eliminate ambiguity by enacting clear, long-term policies on inheritance, trust structures, jurisdictional matters, and family office taxation," said Haroon.

To achieve credibility as a hub for family offices, he added Malaysia needs world-class advisers spreading the word and successful case studies to demonstrate what can be achieved here.

"Creating a mature financial ecosystem is the most complex of the three keys to success. An ecosystem is the combination of regulations, lifestyle, financial opportunities, talent, market access, and connectivity. Together, all these factors make it possible to do business at a world-class level.

"The ecosystem in Malaysia needs a 'Family Office Talent Pass' to attract global wealth management experts, of which there are too few in the country. We need to deepen capital market products tailored to family offices," he said.

Haroon believes Malaysia will rapidly deliver on these key areas and successfully compete with the likes of Hong Kong by defining its own niche as the Asian home for small and medium-sized family offices – thus reaping billions of ringgit in economic benefits.

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BUDGET 2026 WISH LIST

'Allocate funds to upgrade port waste reception infra'

Move will help Malaysia strengthen environmental compliance with international conventions while supporting industry competitiveness: Expert

PETALING JAYA: The government should allocate funds to develop and upgrade port reception facilities (PRF) to enhance environmental compliance under Budget 2026, said Hexagon Synergy Group, a pioneer in PRF development in Malaysia.

Its head of sustainability and strategic planning, Dr Nur Zulaikha Yusof, said such an initiative would help Malaysia strengthen compliance with international maritime waste conventions, such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (Marpol), while supporting industry competitiveness.

"This means expanding the number and capacity of port reception facilities so that ports and terminals can receive oily waste, garbage, sewage and other Marpol waste without delay.

"By meeting Marpol's adequacy standards, Malaysia can avoid violations and protect its waters. Budget support is critical here, as many ports might not invest in costly port reception facilities on their own," she told Bernama.

She said government grants or co-financing for PRF would directly improve compliance and also signal to international shipping lines that Malaysian ports are environmentally responsible.

"This enhances competitiveness, as shippers increasingly prefer ports that help them meet global green requirements and avoid fines," she added.

Zulaikha also opined that the government could introduce subsidies or fee reconciliation measures via the budget for industry players to reduce their operating costs in complying with waste regulations.

For instance, she said the government could subsidise a portion of waste disposal costs or implement a flat environmental fee included in port dues, so ships are not charged extra per volume of waste.

"The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and industry bodies recommend fee models that remove cost disincentives for using reception facilities.

"By adopting these models in Malaysia – potentially through a government-backed fund that reimburses ports or PRF contractors – all ships would be encouraged to offload waste in port rather than risk illegal dumping," she said.

She noted that such measures would uphold Marpol standards, ensuring compliant companies are not penalised with higher costs.

An added benefit, she said, is that Malaysian-flagged ships complying with Marpol would avoid detentions or penalties in foreign ports, thereby improving their international reputation.

Zulaikha also highlighted that strengthening compliance also requires robust enforcement.

She said Budget 2026 can allocate funds for training Port State Control officers and marine environmental inspectors, enhancing their ability to inspect ships for Marpol violations and ensure waste is not discharged at sea.

"This includes investment in surveillance such as aerial drones or satellite monitoring of illicit discharges in Malaysian waters, and better interagency coordination," she said.

She added that by improving enforcement capacity, Malaysia can fulfil its duty as a coastal State to prevent pollution in its waters.

In essence, Budget 2026 can fund a compliance boost through infrastructure, subsidies and enforcement improvements, aligning Malaysia's practices with international conventions while maintaining an efficient, attractive maritime sector.

Budget 2026 could also allocate resources to multi-stakeholder programmes that bring together regulators, port operators, industry players, and researchers to innovate in waste management, she said.

In terms of enforcement, the government should align its policies to reward circular practices, perhaps by adjusting procurement policies to favour shippers and logistics providers with strong environment, social and governance (ESG) records, or by embedding circular economy criteria into port operating licenses.

Zulaikha noted that through Budget 2026 measures, the government signals that maritime waste management is not merely about compliance, but about opportunity and a chance to innovate and lead in sustainability.

"This could entail sponsoring research into new technologies – Action 5 of the Marine Litter Action Plan stresses deploying innovation against marine pollution – and providing seed funding for start-ups that tackle ship waste," she said

"By integrating these efforts into national ESG and circular economy agendas, Malaysia can enhance its environmental stewardship while also generating economic value – a true win-win supported by enlightened budget priorities," she added.

RHB: Need to strike balance between fiscal discipline, sustainable growth

KUALA LUMPUR: Budget 2026 must strike the right balance between fiscal consolidation and growth-supportive measures to ensure resilience in the banking sector and the broader economy, said RHB Banking Group.

Group chief economist Barnabas Gan said the government's commitment to strengthening fiscal discipline while unlocking growth through micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) support, digitalisation and green finance would be crucial to sustaining credit growth, creating jobs and reinforcing long-term economic resilience.

"Our view of the banking sector's top three priorities for Budget 2026 is fiscal stability, a stronger business climate, and advancing sustainable finance," he told Bernama when asked about the banking sector's wish list for the upcoming announcement on Oct 10.

Gan also emphasised that a clear and measured path to fiscal consolidation would bolster investor confidence and reduce sovereign risk, citing targets of narrowing the fiscal deficit to 3.5% in 2026 and 3.2% in 2027.

He said the banking industry would also benefit from policies that further develop growth corridors in Penang, Johor and potentially Sarawak, alongside incentives for high-growth sectors such as the digital economy, Islamic finance, renewable energy and the electrical and electronics industry.

"Continued support for MSMEs through preferential tax measures, credit guarantees and digitalisation grants will create jobs, strengthen the corporate ecosystem and drive credit demand," he added.

On sustainable finance, Gan noted that expanding green bonds, sukuk and environmental, social and governance-linked lending, together with strategic tax incentives, would position Malaysia as a regional hub for green financing.

LIAM's proposals to promote financial inclusion and protection for all Malaysians

PETALING JAYA: Ahead of the tabling of Budget 2026 on Friday, Life Insurance Association of Malaysia (LIAM) has come up with two proposals – to strengthen financial inclusion and raise awareness on the importance of financial protection among Malaysians.

The recommendations focus on enhancing healthcare coverage and well-being, encouraging proactive financial planning, and expanding insurance protection for the general public as well as employees across the country.

Proposal 1: Increase combined tax relief for education, medical and health insurance from RM4,000 to RM6,000.

Currently, taxpayers enjoy a maximum of RM4,000 tax relief on premiums paid for medical and education insurance combined. This amount is insufficient in most cases.

For example, medical insurance for an average family of two adults and three children costs above RM3,000 per annum at the lower end. Hence, there is no savings for premium per annum for this family to support the education policy of the three children, which is not enough.

Given the importance of health insurance for Malaysians, the tax relief for this type of insurance plan should be increased to RM6,000. This adjustment will be to ease financial burden of rising medical costs on families and encourage taxpayers to invest in long-term healthcare planning.

This increase is necessary to ease the financial burden on taxpayers caused by the rising costs of medical care.

Persatuan Insurans Hayat Malaysia
Life Insurance Association of Malaysia

According to AON's Global Medical Trend Rates Report, Malaysia's medical cost inflation surged to 12.6% in 2023, far exceeding the global average of 9.2%, and ranking among the highest in the Asia-Pacific region. Medical costs typically escalate with age, and many taxpayers are relying on their current income to fund future long term healthcare expenses. AON's forecasts Malaysia's medical inflation to reach 15% in 2025, higher than global's average of 10%.

LIAM said in a statement the life insurance industry continues to play a critical role in helping Malaysians plan for their protection needs – whether in healthcare, medical coverage, or education for their children. In 2024 alone, the life insurance sector disbursed RM16.8 billion in benefit payouts, of which RM8.9 billion were for medical insurance claims. These figures highlight the vital role of medical insurance in managing healthcare costs for policyholders.

Proposal 2: Waive 8% service tax on group employee insurance scheme,

Based on published statistics, less than half of the workers are covered under the group insurance scheme, leaving a significant protection gap. This gap is especially concerning for lower income groups, including the B40, who may not be able to afford personal insurance.

To address this, LIAM proposes a waiver of the 8% service tax on group employee insurance schemes. This will encourage more employers to provide group insurance benefits particularly for employees unable to purchase personal coverage; reduce business operating costs, especially for small and medium enterprises, and subsequently incentivise them to maintain employee insurance coverage; ease the pressure on the public healthcare system, as insured employees often seek treatment in private facilities.

The proposed tax exemption will greatly benefit workers, employers, and the national economy, while also contributing to the increase in insurance coverage rates among Malaysians.

LIAM said the life insurance industry is committed to supporting the well-being of Malaysians through financial protection, healthcare funding, and long-term savings. With the right policies and incentives, the private sector can complement the Government in sharing the socio-economic costs of protecting the *rakyat*.

LIAM believes that adopting these two proposals under Budget 2026 will significantly enhance financial inclusion, improve penetration rate and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient economy for Malaysia.

IBM Malaysia hoping for AI-related incentives

KUALA LUMPUR: IBM Malaysia Sdn Bhd hopes Budget 2026 will provide stronger and more targeted incentives for artificial intelligence (AI) to accelerate digital transformation across key sectors of the economy.

Country general manager and technology leader Dickson Woo said the anticipated boost in incentives would encourage wider adoption of the technology, particularly within the country's Critical National Information Infrastructure (CNII) sectors.

"With this stimulus budget coming in, it will help to accelerate the AI journey and take adoption to the next level.

"It will definitely impact the CNII sectors and many enterprises, including the banks, retail, government, and utilities. These are critical components for Malaysia and engines for growth," he told Bernama.

Woo noted that, apart from large enterprises, it is also important to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs), especially those in the digital and technology sectors, as many still struggle to afford major investments.

He said that a greater focus on SMEs in the budget would help ensure that the benefits of digitalisation are shared more broadly by the *rakyat*.

Australia approves Cboe's bid to operate as local IPO venue

Country now has four markets licensed to list securities, ASX shares hit lowest level since mid-2024

SYDNEY: Australia's corporate regulator yesterday approved Cboe Global Markets' bid to list new companies on its local exchange, ramping up direct competition with the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) in the country's tough initial public offering (IPO) market.

Cboe Australia, the local unit of the Chicago-headquartered exchange operator, can now list new companies, offering investors increased access to investment options such as initial public offerings and dual-listed foreign entities.

ASX shares fell as much 2% to the lowest since mid-June 2024 as it faces ongoing regulatory scrutiny into its beleaguered operations. The stock closed at A$58.96 (RM164.45), down 1.35%.

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (Asic) launched an investigation in June into the ASX, following years of tension over a failed software upgrade and recurring trade-processing glitches.

Australia's central bank said last month the ASX needed to implement major cultural and governance improvements after a 2024 trading settlement failure.

"This move will provide more choice for companies to list in Australia, build more links to offshore markets and create more options for investors," Asic chair Joe Longo said in a statement.

Heightened competition in Australian equities markets has already led to reduced trading costs and broader access to products like exchange-traded funds, the regulator said.

The ASX said it supported competition which helped to strengthen Australian's capital markets and said it already competed with Cboe in some trading categories.

"Public markets play a critical role in supporting companies to raise capital for growth opportunities, and we're confident in the strong value proposition that ASX provides," ASX said in an emailed statement to Reuters.

Listing fees are a major revenue source for the ASX, which in the last financial year earned A$208 million from listings, the results released in August showed. IPO fees earned in the year fell from A$20 million to A$18.9 million, according to the results.

There has been US$1.3 billion (RM5.4 billion) worth of IPOs in Australia so far this year, according to LSEG data, up from $382.6 million at the same time last year.

Desite the jump, most of the funds raised in 2025 have come from just two IPOs – Virgin Australia and Gemlife – which raised almost US$950 million combined.

Cboe Australia currently has 20% of Australia's equity market turnover, representing almost A$2 billion of trades each day, ASIC said.

Cboe Australia told Reuters in an emailed response that it was pleased to have received the regulator's approval. It operates exchanges in the US, Canada and the Netherlands alongside its Australian operations, according to its website.

There are now four markets, including Cboe, licensed to list securities in Australia: ASX, National Stock Exchange of Australia and Sydney Stock Exchange, ASIC said. – Reuters

World Bank lifts China 2025 GDP forecast to 4.8%

LONDON: The World Bank lifted its 2025 growth projection for China to 4.8% and raised its forecast for much of the region, but warned of slowing momentum next year, citing low consumer and business confidence and weak new export orders.

Publishing its biannual economic outlook for East Asia and the Pacific region yesterday, the World Bank said it now expected China to grow 4.2% next year, after forecasting in April growth of 4% both this year and next.

"Growth in China, the region's largest economy, is projected to decline ... because of an expected slowdown in export growth and a likely reduction in the fiscal stimulus in light of rising public debt, as well as continued structural deceleration," the authors of the report wrote.

The World Bank said it expected the rest of the East Asia and Pacific region to grow by 4.4% in 2025 – a 0.2 percentage point uplift – but stuck to its 4.5% prediction for 2026.

The lender blamed the subdued momentum on higher trade barriers, elevated global economic policy uncertainty and slower global growth, with political and policy unpredictability especially in Indonesia and Thailand adding to pressure.

"Firms adopt a 'wait-and-see' approach, delaying or scaling back capital expenditures," the report said.

Global economic growth has been under pressure this year due to a major shakeup in US economic policies. Asia, home to key export-driven economies, has been caught in the crosshairs of US President Donald Trump's unpredictable trade policy.

Data in September showed China's factory output and retail sales registered their weakest growth in nearly a year, coming on top of other indicators suggesting the economy is still some way off from mounting a strong recovery.

Analysts expect Beijing to roll out more stimulus to fend off a sharp slowdown in the world's second-largest economy and support the government's annual growth target of "around 5%".

The World Bank also urged countries to remain focused on longer-term prospects, saying that supporting near-term growth through fiscal measures may deliver less durable development benefits than deeper domestic reforms. – Reuters



Women in traditional Chinese costumes at the surroundings of the Forbidden City in Beijing during National Day Golden Week holiday on Monday. The World Bank warned of slowing growth momentum for China next year, citing low consumer and business confidence and weak new export orders. – ***AFPPIC***

Surprisingly smooth Japan bond auction soothes nerves

TOKYO: Japanese government bond yields retreated from record highs yesterday after a closely watched sale of 30-year debt passed smoothly, despite concerns that the country's likely next prime minister will loosen fiscal restraints.

The benign, if unspectacular, auction allayed market jitters that had pushed 30-year JGB yields up 6 basis points (bps) to an all-time time high of 3.345% in early trading.

After the announcement, those yields reversed course and were down as much as 5 bps at 3.235%. Bond yields move inversely to prices.

The auction "provided the market with an unexpectedly calm and reassuring signal", said Shoki Omori, chief desk strategist at Mizuho Securities.

However, "durable calm hinges on fiscal policy signals and subsequent super-long (JGB) supply," he added.

Weak demand at long-term debt auctions earlier this year triggered record spikes in yields that prompted the Ministry of Finance to curtail issuance of 20-, 30-, and 40-year securities – something that analysts and investors say has improved the supply-demand balance.

The 20-year JGB yield climbed 5 bps in early trading yesterday to 2.74%, the highest since August 1999, but also flipped direction after the auction and were down as much as 3 bps at 2.66%.

The 10-year yield, which had risen 2.5 bps to 1.695% for the first time since July 2008, erased that advance.

In another development, Japanese Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato said yesterday that the government will be vigilant for volatile movements on the currency market, as the yen slid to two-month lows past 150 to the dollar amid rising fiscal concerns.

"It's important for currencies to move in a stable manner reflecting fundamentals," Kato said at a regular news conference, when about recent foreign exchange moves.

"We will thoroughly monitor for excessive fluctuations and disorderly movements in the foreign exchange market," he added.

The yen touched 150.62 to the dollar, the weakest level since Aug 1, and skidded to 176.35 per euro, a fresh all-time low. – Reuters

Indonesia takes another step towards B50 biodiesel

JAKARTA: Indonesia took another step towards launching biodiesel containing 50% palm-oil based biofuel (B50) by concluding laboratory tests, an energy ministry official said yesterday, as the country aims for implementation next year.

Palm-oil based biodiesel is currently mandated at 40% blend (B40) but Indonesia wants to increase the level to reduce its reliance on imports of fossil fuels.

The laboratory testing involved running an engine using the B50 fuel and was concluded in August. Officials will now carry out road tests, the energy ministry's bioenergy director, Edi Wibowo, told Reuters.

"Based on the test results we will move forward to launch road tests and testing on non-automotive machinery that run on diesel," he said.

The timing of the road test was still to be decided, he said.

Indonesia aims to make B50 mandatory in 2026, but it was unlikely to happen in January, a senior energy ministry official said in August.

Adopting B50 would require 20.1 million kilolitres of palm-oil based biofuel a year for mixing with regular petroleum diesel, compared to 15.6 million KL with B40, energy ministry data shows. – Reuter



OpenAI's Simo: AI boom new normal, not bubble

Company exec says next wave of intelligent systems will understand users' goals and act on them automatically

SAN FRANCISCO: The dizzying investments in artificial intelligence infrastructure do not constitute a bubble but rather represent today's "new normal" to meet skyrocketing user demand, Fidji Simo, OpenAI's de facto number two, said on Monday.

The French-born executive made her comments in an interview with AFP, her first since taking up her role as chief operating officer of OpenAI's applications, including its flagship model ChatGPT.

In the past few weeks, her company, under the leadership of CEO Sam Altman, has made a series of huge investments in data centres and AI chips, despite no real signs that the fast-emerging AI business is close to breaking even.

The answers were lightly edited for length and clarity.

Is the AI investment frenzy a bubble right now?

What I am seeing here is a massive investment in compute (or computing power), with us meeting that need for computing power so incredibly badly for a lot of use cases that people want. [Video AI generator] Sora is a great example right now – there's much more demand than we can serve.

From that perspective, I really do not see that as a bubble. I see that as a new normal, and I think the world is going to switch to realising that computing power is the most strategic resource.

What do you say to those who fret over AI's dangers?

I see my job as really making sure that the good side of this technology happens and we mitigate the bad side.

Take mental health, for example. I'm hearing tonnes of users say that they go to ChatGPT for advice in tough moments where they may not have other people to talk to. Many people can't afford to go to a therapist.

I talk to a lot of parents who are telling me: God, I got this really awesome advice that helped me unlock a situation with my child. But at the same time, we need to make sure that the model behaves as expected.

On mental health, we have announced a very robust roadmap. We started with parental controls. We have plans to launch age prediction: if we can predict that the user is a teenager, we give them a model that is less permissive than we would give to an adult.

Jobs are also very much on my mind, and it's a similar approach. AI is going to create a lot of jobs, like prompt engineering, that absolutely did not exist before. At the same time, there are some professions that are going to be directly impacted, and we see our role as helping with the transition.

What are the next steps toward intelligent AI?

I think the breakthroughs are about models understanding your goals and helping accomplish them proactively.

Not just give you a good answer to a question, not just have a dialogue, but actually tell you, 'Oh, okay, you're telling me that you want to spend more time with your wife. Well, there might be some weekend getaways that would be helpful, and I know it's a lot to plan, so I've already done all the planning for you and I've already made some reservations. Just tap one button to approve and everything gets done.'

We're still very early, but we're on that journey to capture that.

In San Francisco, you sometimes hear: 'America innovates, China copies, Europe regulates'

As a European, every time I hear this saying, my heart breaks a bit. I think there has certainly been a tendency in Europe to focus on regulation a little too much.

On China, we continue to be extremely focused on continuing to have a lead, because we see China continuing to invest heavily in being competitive – whether in terms of innovation or in terms of computing – and so we think it's incredibly important to continue investing across a democratic bloc to advance AI that has these [democratic] values.

Do you let your child use ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is not supposed to be for under 13, but my kid is 10 – I still let her use it under supervision.

It's magical to see what she's able to create. Just this weekend, she was telling me about creating a new business. She was using ChatGPT to make banners for the new business, to create taglines.

In our childhood, we couldn't turn our imagination into something real that fast. And I see that really giving her superpowers, where she thinks anything is possible. – AFP

Airport serving LA left without air traffic control in US shutdown

LOS ANGELES: A busy California airport had no air traffic controllers on Monday evening, the state's governor said, as the effects of a US government shutdown rippled across the country.

Hollywood Burbank Airport, which connects Los Angeles to the rest of the country, was set to be without qualified staff in the control tower for around six hours, Governor Gavin Newsom said.

"Thanks @realDonaldTrump!" wrote Newsom on X. "Burbank Airport has ZERO air traffic controllers from 4.15pm to 10pm today because of YOUR government shutdown."

The Federal Aviation Authority (FAA), which regulates flying in the US, said departures to the airport were delayed by around two-and-a-half hours.

"BUR TOWER ATC ZERO. RATE REDUCED DUE TO STAFFING," it said in an advisory.

Broadcaster ABC7 said its reporters had spoken to people at the airport who confirmed the tower would be unstaffed.

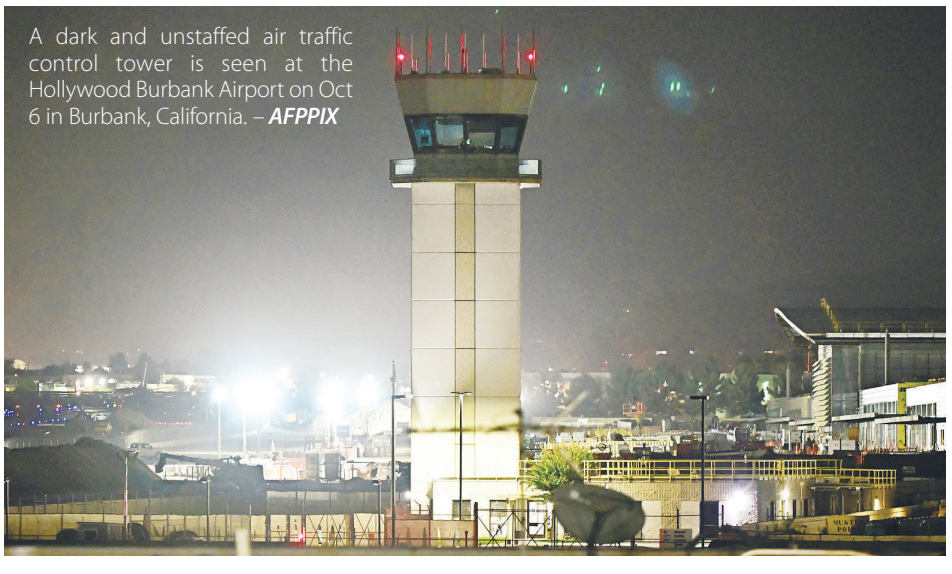
The staff said duties at Burbank would be handled by a team in San Diego, which would speak to pilots coming in and going out of the airport.

In a statement to AFP, a spokesman for the airport said "operations are continuing."

"We are advising passengers to check with their airline – before arriving at the airport – for updates on possible delays or cancellations," the statement said.

The development comes as a nationwide government shutdown enters its second week, with Donald Trump's Republican Party at odds with Democrats over how to pay for many of the US government's functions.

Most federal workers have been placed on enforced leave, and are not being paid during the shutdown.



A dark and unstaffed air traffic control tower is seen at the Hollywood Burbank Airport on Oct 6 in Burbank, California. – ***AFPPIX***

But those doing jobs considered essential, like air traffic controllers, are expected to continue to work, albeit without pay.

Political commentators have said it is only a matter of time before this system – effectively one of good will – breaks, and staff begin to call in sick while they are not being paid.

Democrats are refusing to provide the votes the ruling Republicans need to reopen federal departments, unless an agreement is reached on extending expiring "Obamacare" health care subsidies and reversing some cuts to health programmes passed as part of Trump's signature "One Big Beautiful Bill."

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated the bill, which was signed into law on July 4, would strip 11 million Americans of health care coverage, mainly through cuts to the Medicaid programme for low-income families.

That figure would be in addition to the four million Americans whom Democrats say will lose health care next year if the health insurance subsidies are not extended – while another 24 million Americans will see their premiums double.

Republicans argue the expiring health care subsidies have nothing to do with keeping the government open and can be dealt with separately before the end of the year. – AFP

Tesla to launch cheaper Model Y to boost sales

SAN FRANCISCO: Tesla is expected to unveil yesterday a more affordable version of its best-selling Model Y SUV, as the electric vehicle (EV) maker seeks to reverse falling sales and waning market share amid rising global competition.

CEO Elon Musk for years has promised mass market vehicles, though last year he canceled plans to build an all-new US$25,000 (RM105,000) EV, Reuters first reported. The car expected this week is an "affordable" vehicle based on current manufacturing and design platforms.

Tesla posted two clips on X over the weekend, igniting excitement among Tesla fans. One video shows headlights peering out of the dark and another shows what looks like a wheel spinning for a few seconds, followed by "10/7", the US format for the date Oct 7.

Neither Tesla nor influencers have indicated that an in-person event is in the works, in contrast to previous major Tesla launches. Still, analysts, investors and fans expect the company to make some kind of announcement.

Major questions include the car's price, driving range and efforts to strip down costs. Late last year, Musk said the vehicle would be priced below the "key threshold" of US$30,000 including US EV tax credits.

In the US, prices effectively rose by US$7,500 at the end of last month, when the credit ended. That helped goose quarterly sales to a record, but expectations are that they will slow down for the rest of the year, unless the affordable car comes to the rescue.

"The desire to buy the car is very high. (It's) just (that) people don't have enough money in the bank account to buy it," Musk said in July during Tesla's second-quarter earnings call. "So the more affordable we can make the car, the better."

Musk initially promised that production of the vehicle would start by the end of June. But Tesla only made what it called "first builds" of the car, it said in July, adding that it would be available for customers in the last three months of the year.

Tesla has already been grappling with slowing sales of its aging lineup as competition has grown rapidly, especially in China and Europe, where Musk's far-right political views also have undermined brand loyalty.

Earlier this year, Tesla launched a refreshed version of the Model Y with improvements including new light bars and a rear touchscreen. – Reuters

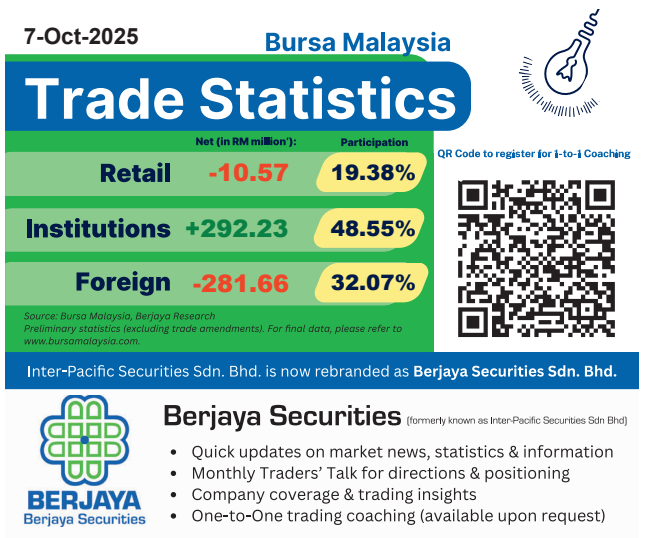
Bitcoin hits new high on strong investor demand

NEW YORK: Bitcoin hit a new record high on Monday as the world's largest cryptocurrency by market value continued to benefit from strong investor demand. The rally since the start of the year has been fueled by institutional investors, friendlier policies under US President Donald Trump, and a bitcoin's increasing connection with global financial systems.

Bitcoin rose as high as US$125,835.92 (RM530,064) after climbing above US$125,000 for the first time on Sunday. It was last up 2.02% at US$125,253.63, on course for the second straight session of gains. It has risen more than 33% this year.

"Bitcoin is the hurdle rate. If you can't beat it, you have to buy it. And I think the next 12 weeks are going to be very fun for bitcoin holders," wrote Anthony Pompliano, founder and CEO of Professional Capital Management, in a letter to investors on Monday. Bitcoin's ascent has coincided with the weakness of the US dollar against major peers as Trump's tariffs on US trade partners and uncertainty about their impact have prompted investors to diversify away from US assets. – Reuters

MARKET ROUND-UP: OCT 7



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

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

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

Bursa Indices

INDEX		CHANGE
FBMEMAS	12,127.30	-53.60
FBMKLCI	1,630.03	-8.06
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	519.39	+0.12
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	173.59	+0.07
CONSTRUCTION	326.61	-2.75
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,571.90	-63.96
ENERGY	780.57	-5.56
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	495.38	-4.96
HEALTH CARE	1,584.25	-18.61
TRANSPORTATION	1,016.07	-5.56
PROPERTY	1,055.60	-12.74
PLANTATION	7,793.85	-26.18
FBMSHA	12,133.30	-64.37
FBMACE	5,311.41	-22.06
TECHNOLOGY	63.50	+0.55

TURNOVER: 3.481 bil **VALUE: RM2.983 bil**

Bursa pulls back, expert says it's a 'healthy consolidation'

BURSA Malaysia closed lower yesterday as investors took profit after recent gains, an analyst said.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI fell 8.06 points, or 0.49%, to 1,630.03, from Monday's close of 1,638.09.

The benchmark index opened 2.03 points lower at 1,636.06, and moved between 1,624.35 and 1,636.50 throughout the trading session

The market breadth was negative, with 717 decliners overwhelming 368 gainers, while 463 counters were unchanged, 1,028 remained untraded, and seven were suspended.

IPPFA Sdn Bhd director of investment strategy and country economist, Mohd Sedek Jantan, said yesterday's pullback remained orderly and should be viewed as a healthy consolidation rather than a sign of structural weakness. "Today's decline was primarily driven by domestic profit-taking rather than any deterioration in market fundamentals. Hence, we expect the FBM KLCI to hold above the 1,609 support level this week," he told Bernama.

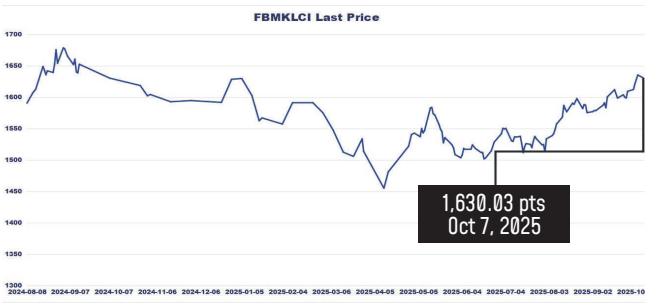
Among heavyweight counters, IHH Healthcare lost 16 sen to RM8.19, Maybank dropped seven sen to RM9.95, and Maxis eased six sen to RM3.64. Tenaga Nasional fell eight sen to RM13.28, and Gamuda erased seven sen to RM5.40.

In active trade, Borneo Oil and Pharmaniga were unchanged at half a sen and 28.5 sen, respectively. ACE Market debutant Cheeding soared 37.5 sen to 73.5 sen, while NexG slipped 1.5 sen to 7.5 sen, and Tanco dipped 2.5 sen to 86 sen.

Top losers included Malayan Cement, which went down 21 sen to RM6.73, while Kluang Rubber lost 20 sen to RM5.50 and LPI slid 18 sen to RM14.40. Batu Kawan slipped 16 sen to RM18.82, and KESM Industries erased 15 sen to RM3.77.

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/-(RM)	+/-(%)	VOLUME ('00)
BORNOIL	0.005	-	-	3,983,663
CHEEDING	0.735	+0.375	+104.17	1,634,840
PHARMA	0.285	-	-	1,582,847
NEXGBINA	0.075	-0.015	-16.67	679,825
TANCO	0.860	-0.025	-2.83	533,546
VS	0.555	+0.005	+0.91	533,312
KNM	0.005	-	-	510,780
VELESTO	0.250	-	-	440,261
GAMUDA	5.400	-0.070	-1.28	413,502
ZETRIX	0.840	-0.010	-1.18	374,152
WPRTS	5.280	+0.010	+0.19	338,687
YTL-C1F	0.020	-	-	334,850
3REN	0.450	+0.050	+12.50	324,414
MRDIY	1.690	-	-	307,781
ZETRIX-C9Y	0.065	-0.005	-7.14	302,000
DNEX	0.255	-0.005	-1.92	287,341
SPSETIA	0.970	-0.030	-3.00	275,362
NEXG	0.515	-0.005	-0.96	258,185
FRONTKN-WB	0.355	+0.040	+12.70	255,777
EAH	0.005	-0.005	-50.00	243,260



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
MPI	31.480	+0.480	3,101
CHEEDING	0.735	+0.375	1,634,840
NESTLE	97.660	+0.360	450
F&N	28.280	+0.280	833
HEIM	21.300	+0.240	4,510
UNISEM	3.560	+0.210	30,127
PPB	10.680	+0.160	18,357
UNISEM-C47	0.400	+0.160	2,203
UNISEM-C48	0.310	+0.160	100
UMSINT	4.920	+0.140	336
ALLIANZ-PA	17.920	+0.120	186
EUROSP	2.900	+0.120	96
HLIND	14.240	+0.120	1,116
MI-C34	0.295	+0.105	12,812
DKSH	4.960	+0.100	1,161
PCHEM	4.300	+0.100	48,196
AAX	1.720	+0.090	26,647
IGBB	3.300	+0.090	4
UNISEM-C46	0.460	+0.090	400
CATCHA-R1	0.090	+0.085	73,059

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
MCEMENT	6.730	-0.210	13,424
SHL	2.340	-0.210	232
KLUANG	5.500	-0.200	70
LPI	14.400	-0.180	561
BKAWAN	18.820	-0.160	11
IHH	8.190	-0.160	83,468
KESM	3.770	-0.150	915
PETDAG	22.900	-0.140	2,501
PETGAS	18.680	-0.140	4,370
CHINA100-MYR	1.240	-0.110	173
GAMUDA-C3K	0.260	-0.105	35
HARTA-C3D	0.045	-0.105	3,700
BAT	4.940	-0.100	4,885
KLK	20.300	-0.100	14,033
HUMEIND	3.340	-0.090	2,475
MISC	7.260	-0.090	63,848
PLENITU	2.070	-0.090	16,767
INARI-C3M	0.120	-0.085	791
TENAGA	13.280	-0.080	18,283
YINSON	2.330	-0.080	81,703

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
CATCHA-R1	0.090	+1700.00	73,059
UNISEM-C48	0.310	+106.67	100
CHEEDING	0.735	+104.17	1,634,840
AMD-C1	0.095	+72.73	4,125
UNISEM-C47	0.400	+66.67	2,203
MI-C34	0.295	+55.26	12,812
CTOS-C17	0.015	+50.00	500
FBG-WC	0.015	+50.00	35,114
PARKWD-WA	0.045	+50.00	418
YB-LA	0.015	+50.00	681
MBL-WB	0.065	+44.44	582
INARI-C3S	0.150	+36.36	5,400
MI-C36	0.150	+36.36	670
FRONTKN-C46	0.200	+33.33	6,275
KRONO-WA	0.060	+33.33	1,884
AAX-C28	0.085	+30.77	25,925
UNISEM-C50	0.195	+30.00	656
PESTEC-WA	0.045	+28.57	1
CTOS-C21	0.075	+25.00	1,501
LCTITAN-CT	0.025	+25.00	19,928

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HARTA-C3D	0.045	-70.00	3,700
HSI-PWJS	0.005	-66.67	8
BAUTO-C46	0.005	-50.00	49,774
BINACOM-WA	0.005	-50.00	2,816
EAH	0.005	-50.00	243,260
FOCUS	0.005	-50.00	38,274
GCB-C27	0.010	-50.00	1,729
HONGSENG	0.005	-50.00	14,441
NETX-WD	0.005	-50.00	150
YTL-HH	0.050	-44.44	10,060
INARI-C3M	0.120	-41.46	791
GCB-C29	0.030	-40.00	50,100
EVD-WB	0.040	-38.46	1,200
MAHSING-C82	0.025	-37.50	3,650
SKPRES-C28	0.025	-37.50	5,300
IHH-C50	0.065	-35.00	3,014
ECOHLDS	0.020	-33.33	4,555
KPJ-C21	0.020	-33.33	29,297
MTRONIC	0.010	-33.33	1,001
MOBILIA-WB	0.010	-33.33	3

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	46,694.97	-63.31	-0.14
S&P 500 (US)	6,740.28	24.49	0.36
NASDAQ (US)	22,941.67	161.16	0.71
NYSE (US)	21,765.00	39.6	0.18
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	5,617.86	-10.86	-0.19
FTSE 100 (UK)	9,484.76	5.62	0.06
DAX (GER)	24,330.12	-48.17	-0.2
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	47,950.88	6.12	0.01
TOPIX INDEX (JPN)	3,227.91	1.85	0.06
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	26,957.77	-183.15	-0.67
CSI 300 (CHN)	4,640.69	20.64	0.45
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	225.29	1.05	0.47
SHANGHAI SE COM (CHN)	3,882.78	20.25	0.52
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	3,549.21	93.38	2.7
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	82,238.32	448.2	0.55
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,956.80	-24.63	-0.27
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	9,253.63	-26.39	-0.28
FBM KLCI	1,629.14	-8.95	-0.55
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	4,466.91	45.2	1.02
WTI (US$/BBL.)	61.61	-0.08	-0.13
BRENT (US$/BBL.)	65.38	-0.06	-0.09
GOLD (COMEX) (US$/T OZ)	3,976.30	0	0
SILVER (COMEX) (US$/T OZ)	47.97	-0.48	-1
PLATINUM (US$/T OZ)	1,610.66	-13.74	-0.85
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	505.8	2	0.4
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US$/MT)	10,654.50	-61	-0.57
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	422	0.25	0.06
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	513.25	0.5	0.1
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	50.48	0.1	0.2
COCOA (ICE) (US$/MT)	6,268.00	-15	-0.24
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	170.1	-0.4	-0.23

As at 6pm, Oct 7

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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MPC, auto groups drive productivity with digital tools

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC), in strategic collaboration with the Perodua Suppliers Association (P2SA) and Proton Vendors Association (PVA), is strengthening the productivity and competitiveness of the country's automotive industry through the implementation of the AI for Productivity Transformation Programme.

In a statement, MPC said the programme, implemented under the Automotive Productivity Nexus (AutoPN), is aimed at accelerating digital transformation and improving overall production efficiency among local automotive companies.

"A total of 17 artificial intelligence (AI)-powered productivity improvement projects have been developed, and the companies involved are now ready to expand the autonomous AI usage to other parts of their production operations.

"In the next phase, at least 50 more AI projects will be implemented within five years to accelerate digital transformation and strengthen the industry's competitiveness," MPC said.

Meanwhile, AutoPN chairman Datuk Abdul Rashid Musa said that the programme has had a significant impact on the performance of the participating companies.

"This initiative has significantly reduced the time needed for the preparation and monitoring of production performance. The use of AI enables companies to operate more efficiently, allowing them to focus on higher value-added activities," he said.

MPC director-general Datuk Zahid Ismail said this collaborative approach is highly effective in strengthening the local workforce.

"Workers now have skills to use AI in daily operations and act as transformation agents within their respective organisations." – Bernama

Ringgit higher against dollar on renewed buying interest

THE ringgit closed slightly stronger against the US dollar on Tuesday, supported by renewed buying interest in the local unit following recent signs of improved sentiment in regional markets.

At 6pm, the local currency was quoted at 4.2125/2155 against the greenback, marking a modest improvement from Monday's close of 4.2135/2180, as investors showed a mild preference for emerging-market currencies.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said the USD/MYR pair traded within a tight band, hovering around the RM4.21 level throughout the day, indicating that market participants are still awaiting fresh catalysts before taking stronger positions on either side.

He noted that the US Dollar Index (DXY) stayed elevated, supporting a stronger greenback amid ongoing political uncertainties in advanced economies.

"The upcoming Budget 2026 is likely to provide near-term support for the ringgit," he told Bernama.

At the close, the ringgit was mostly higher against a basket of major currencies. It rose against the euro to 4.9135/9170 from 4.9155/9207 and strengthened versus the Japanese yen to 2.7938/7960 from 2.8019/8051, but eased against the British pound to 5.6620/6661 from 5.6608/6669.

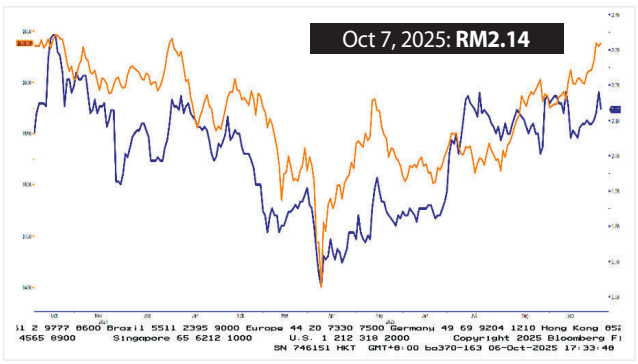
Against Asean currencies, the local note was mostly weaker, except for the Thai baht, which rose to 12.9532/9688 from 12.9810/13.0009. It slipped versus the Singapore dollar to 3.2587/2613 from 3.2562/2599, fell against the Philippine peso to 7.25/7.26 from 7.22/7.23, and declined versus the Indonesian rupiah to 254.3/254.6 from 254.0/254.4.

Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.2860	4.1380	4.1280
1 Australian Dollar	2.8470	2.7290	2.7130
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3130	3.2080	3.2000
1 Canadian Dollar	3.0660	2.9790	2.9670
1 Euro	5.0140	4.8500	4.8300
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5060	2.4120	2.3960
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3130	3.2080	3.2000
1 Sterling Pound	5.7740	5.5880	5.5680
1 Swiss Franc	5.4160	5.1840	5.1690
100 UAE Dirham	117.8200	111.6500	111.4500
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.5720	3.3480	3.1480
100 Chinese Renminbi	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Danish Krone	68.8600	63.3300	63.1300
100 Hongkong Dollar	55.5400	52.7400	52.5400
100 Indian Rupee	4.9000	4.6000	4.4000
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0267	0.0242	0.0192
100 Japanese Yen	2.8510	2.7460	2.7360
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	44.2400	40.6700	40.4700
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.5400	1.4300	1.2300
100 Philippine Peso	7.4500	7.0100	6.8100
100 Qatar Riyal	118.2900	112.3000	112.1000
100 Saudi Riyal	115.2600	109.4200	109.2200
100 South Africa Rand	25.8200	23.3000	23.1000
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.4500	1.3400	1.1400
100 Swedish Krona	47.0100	42.7900	42.5900
100 Thai Baht	13.7500	12.1900	11.7900

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

IOI Properties Group Bhd
Buy. Target price: RM2.78



Source: Bloomberg

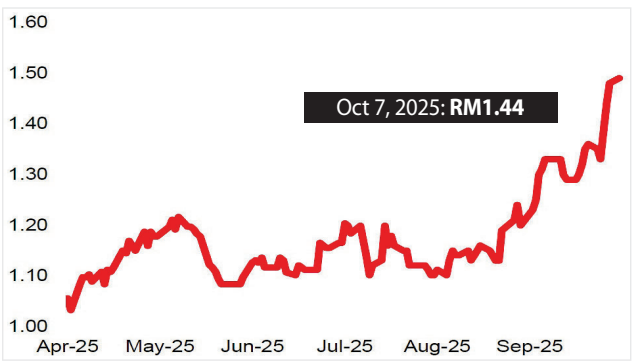
IOI Properties Group (IOIPG) has maintained its FY26 sales target of RM2 billion, representing 10% YoY growth (excluding Marina View). Q1'26 sales are expected to be within expectations, supported by steady take-up in Malaysia's mid-market and township segments. In China, aggressive repricing in 2H'25 helped clear unsold inventory and reignited buyer interest, despite a still-challenging environment.

Attention now turns to W Residences Marina View, IOIPG's flagship development in Singapore with a GDV of S$3.65 billion. The project is slated for a grand launch in October 2025, with management guiding for an average selling price of ~S$5,000 psf. For FY26, we forecast total new sales of RM3.8 billion, comprising RM2 billion from Malaysia and China, and RM1.8 billion from Singapore anchored by a 15% take-up assumption for W Residences. We view this as a base case, given management's target of 25% take-up within the first year. With its prime location and brand strength, there is room for upside should launch momentum outperform expectations.

IOIPG's earnings base is becoming increasingly diversified, with property investment and hospitality collectively contributing 42% of total revenue in FY25, up significantly from just under 20% in FY22. We expect this momentum to continue, particularly within the property investment segment, where IOI City Mall has stood out with ongoing positive rental reversions that continue to anchor the group's recurring income growth. The hospitality segment is also benefiting from rising tourist arrivals and the build-up to Visit Malaysia 2026, reflected in higher occupancies and room rates. With stable cash flows, IOIPG is progressing toward its Malaysia REIT listing by end-CY26. The initial portfolio is expected to include IOI City Mall, along with selected office and hotel assets.

Buy with RM2.78 TP. – ***TA Research, Oct 7***

Malaysia Smelting Corp Bhd
Neutral. Target price: RM1.48



Source: PublicInvest Research

MSC owns the largest tin mines in Malaysia, acquired through the purchase of Rahman Hydraulic Tin Sdn Bhd (RHT) in 2004. On the downstream side, MSC currently operates a smelting plant at Pulau Indah, equipped with a cutting-edge Top Submerged Lance (TSL) furnace and an annual production capacity of 60,000 MT. As an integrated tin producer, MSC can optimise resource utilisation, streamline operations, and adapt more swiftly to market demands.

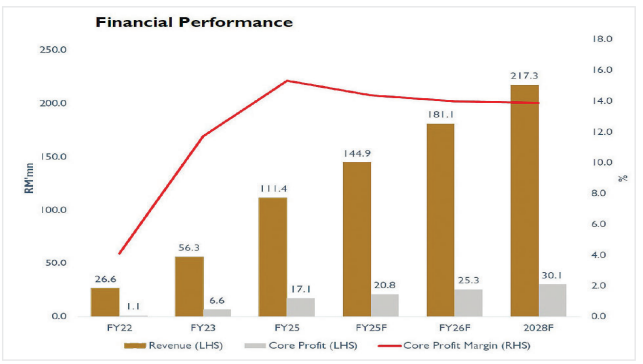
Since acquiring RHT in 2004, extensive transformation work has been carried out in mining and pit operations to enhance efficiency and productivity. Tin-in-concentrates production has increased from 2,238 tonnes in 2014 to 2,516 tonnes in 2024. Additionally, MSC further expanded RHT's existing mining pit eastward by acquiring a 568-acre land parcel through the purchase of Asas Baiduri in 2022, ensuring a long-term supply of tin. To enhance smelting efficiency and cost optimisation, the group is taking a major step by decommissioning the Butterworth smelter by the end of 2025. This is expected to lower operating expenses by 30%.

The outlook for the tin market is favourable, with prices recovering in 2024 from 2023 lows on the back of strong demand and supply constraints. We expect this upward long-term trend to continue, supported by the structural drivers of green energy transition and global digitalisation.

MSC sales are heavily influenced by the demand for tin and its derivative products. A decline in global economic activity or reduced demand from key sectors, such as consumer electronics, automotive electronics, and industrial automation, could negatively impact tin prices.

Neutral with RM1.48 TP. – ***PublicInvest Research, Oct 7***

Verdant Solar Holdings Bhd
Not Rated



Source: Company data, TA Research

VERDANT Solar Holdings Bhd (VERDANT) is a solar energy company specialising in the design, sale, installation, and maintenance of high-quality solar photovoltaic systems for residential, commercial, and industrial clients. The company focuses on providing cost-effective and reliable solar solutions to help customers reduce their electric ity bills and carbon emissions.

Since its establishment in 2013, VERDANT has completed over 2,000 projects and served more than 3,000 customers, promoting sustainable energy use and aiming to contribute to Malaysia's renewable energy goals. VERDANT also prides itself on tailoring solar systems to meet specific energy needs while supporting Malaysia's transition to cleaner energy and a greener future.

The group has built a strong track record in the solar PV industry since 2015, beginning with marketing solar PV systems for residential properties and trading solar ventilators, before expanding into EPCC services in 2019 and O&M services in 2023. It is committed to completing residential solar PV installations within 30 days upon receiving customer deposits.

As at the Sept 2, the group has successfully completed 78.69 MWp of solar PV projects, including 74.63 MWp across residential properties, showcasing its ability to deliver quality and timely projects. Its credentials are reinforced by registrations as a solar PV service provider under SEDA, a Grade 5 CIDB contractor, and Class A with the Energy Commission, enabling participation in NEM and other renewable energy programs. With expertise in navigating local regulatory applications such as NEM, SolaRIS and SELCO, the group provides customers with valuable guidance. Its achievements are further recognised by the Malaysia Book of Records for Most Solar PV Home Installations in 2022, 2023 and 2024, cementing its reputation in the industry. – ***TA Research, Oct 7***

SCAN ME

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Leading with compassion

Miss Universe Malaysia Chloe Lim on bridging opportunity gap – P22

– ADIBRAWIYAHYA/THESUN

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SCAN ME

Empowering femininity

Chloe Lim aims to realign beauty with compassion, intelligence as Malaysia's new Miss Universe

BY **JOHN TAN**

BEAUTY, compassion and intelligence are among the values many aspire for. Society at large has placed great worth on their existence, emphasising their importance in our daily lives. But these values are often said not to co-exist, especially among women.

Chloe Lim Sue Lyn, however, argues otherwise. The 27-year-old lass, who was recently crowned Miss Universe Malaysia, is a strong believer that women can possess these attributes fully. As part of her advocacy as this year's queen, Lim is walking the talk.

"What attracted me this year was the theme. It was redefining your journey and I resonated with that. I was passionate about having a platform to stand for something more.

"What I wanted with Miss Universe was to stand at this intersection that a woman can be beautiful, intelligent and compassionate. This inspired me to take a brave step for myself and try something different," the Kuala Lumpur native told *theSun* at Holiday Inn Bangsar.



Lim's makeup is done by Azmier Hisyamuqris.

Strong exposure to charity, education

Lim's background in academia is evidence of this. Before receiving her crown, she occupied herself with the pursuit of academic excellence. The management consultant holds not one, but three international degrees.

She has a degree in accounting and finance, law and international management. Lim pursued her tertiary studies across the globe, from the UK and New York to Portugal and Estonia, gaining a global education experience.

"I always had a sense of adventure and curiosity. Whether it was reading books, watching films or travelling, I always wanted to see the world. I wanted to immerse myself globally and learn about different cultures. So, I was excited to go abroad and broaden my horizons.

"That is what I did and am grateful for the experiences I had. I am grateful that my family believed in opening one's mind globally."

While it was personally fulfilling, the experience gave Lim a firsthand perspective to global inequalities too. Having seen the effects of inequity among underprivileged communities, she developed a calling for community work.

She has taught orphans in Vietnam and helped build a social shelter for vulnerable girls in Portugal. Locally, she has dedicated herself to offering free English lessons to the children at the local orphanage Lighthouse, closing the educational gap among children.



Lim's hair is styled by Frank Ong and Adrian Tan.



Lim's outfit is from local stylist Evita Mairesse.

"I am also partnering with my old high school to bring the children to career fairs, show them what avenues and opportunities are out there."

Adjustments required

That said, it has not entirely been a smooth transition for the philomath. Though Lim is experienced in academics, charity and corporate affairs, she had never competed in beauty pageants before. This year's Miss Universe was her first time participating.



Lim wearing the crown by A Vintage Collezione. – *ALL PICS BY ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN*

"It was a learning curve. My day-to-day used to be Excel and PowerPoint. But now, my technical skills are having the best makeup, hair, catwalk, social media and content creation. These skills were something I had to learn and ramp up into."

Fortunately, she had her fellow contestant and roommate Priyanka Sockanathan to count on. The duo leaned on one another throughout the competition. Lim, however, had to shoulder through a bigger obstacle on her own.

Upon the announcement of her win, she was met with an intense backlash online. Considering the call for inclusivity this year, many pageant veterans competed alongside Lim – with their presence came an established following and support.

Lim's victory, therefore, came as a surprise as some found her to be too rookie. Additionally, they found her physical attributes to not fit their idea of a beauty queen.

"Being picked apart online by people who might not even know you does hurt. But I choose to respond to it with grace, kindness and compassion. So, I do not react or respond to any of those comments.

"But I do know why I am here and my commitments, which are to give my best to represent Malaysia on the world stage, give back to communities around me and make the impact that I set out to do as Miss Universe Malaysia."

Hard at work

For the past few weeks, Lim has been living up to her word, prepping hard to represent Malaysia at the world stage in Thailand on Nov 21.

"We definitely understand the competition is quite close. So, I am grateful for all the support from the Miss Universe Malaysia Organisation. We have been making sure we craft the right image that represents Malaysia well."

When asked if she feels pressured by former queen Sandra's achievement last year, Lim simply expressed her wish to outdo herself.

"I respect Sandra and her grit, determination and ability to perform. I am not Sandra and I would not be a 2.0, but I will be me. Just showing up as my best and knowing I left my best on stage, that is what motivates me."

As for her plans after the competition, Lim still aims to champion causes close to her heart while taking on new opportunities.

"I would like to speak at conferences that make an impact in Malaysia. I would love to do more of that and continue with my advocacy work. With Lighthouse, working with the children and trying to close the opportunity gap in Malaysia.

"It is truly a life of service. It is truly about what and how much you can give back. That is what I am excited to continue doing," she concluded.

New man at Chanel's helm

After successful stint at Bottega Veneta, Matthieu Blazy moves to French luxury house

MATTHIEU Blazy had the whole fashion world watching his every move as he made his recent debut at Chanel. But who is the 41-year-old designer?



Blazy's new job at Chanel is a massive promotion and career boost.

Chanel has been around for 115 years, having been founded in 1910.

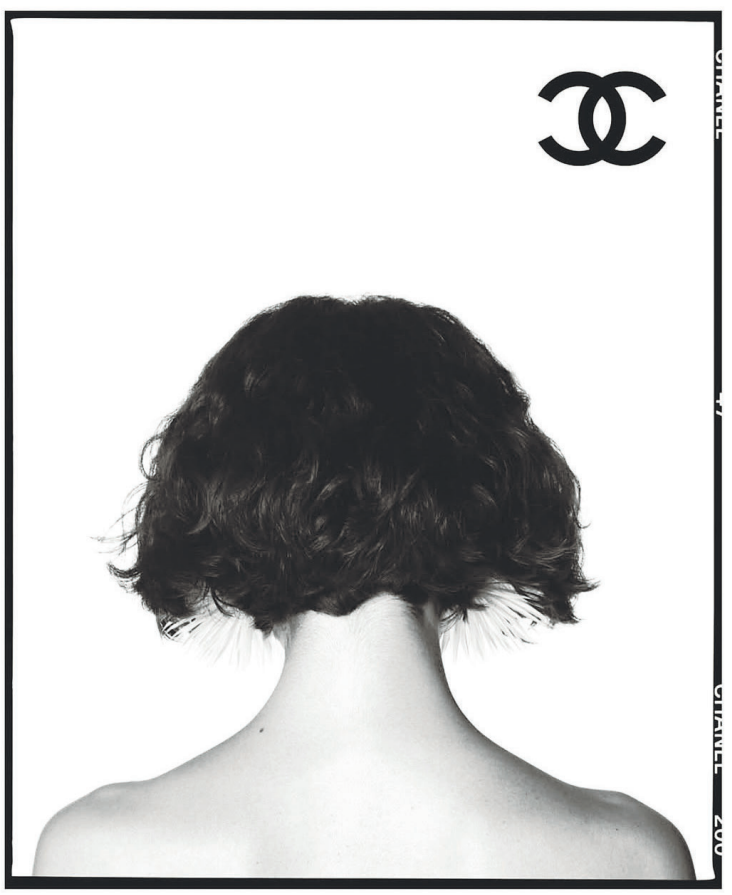
The Franco-Belgian is relatively low-key compared with the celebrity couturiers he beat to the job, and was poached by Chanel after a successful three-year stint at Kering-owned Bottega Veneta.

The new job is a massive promotion and career boost, taking him from a medium-sized Italian label to the world's second-largest luxury clothing brand with sales of around US$20 billion (RM84.28 billion) annually.

Said to have impressed with his in-depth presentations during the recruitment process at Chanel, he embodies "a new generation with sincere humility", Chanel fashion president Bruno Pavlovsky said of Blazy when his nomination was announced last December.

The compliment about his character underlined one of his perceived qualities: the lack of a huge ego in an industry famed for them.

That is seen as a good fit for Chanel's discreet family owners Alain and Gerard Wertheimer.



Blazy's Spring/Summer 2026 for Chanel's teaser poster. – ***PICS FROM INSTAGRAM @CHANELOFFICIAL***



Blazy is credited for several Bottega Veneta iconic staples such as the Drop earrings.

They were looking for a loyal figure to become only the fourth creative director in the brand's fabled history.

"Chanel is a privately owned family house.

"The brand can take a long-term approach and allow time for things," Serge Carreira, a fashion expert at the Sciences Po university in Paris, said after Blazy's nomination.

Blazy's biggest challenge will be moving the Chanel look on from the 40-year period defined by its legendary designer Karl Lagerfeld.

Until last year, the house was directed by Virginie Viard, the late Lagerfeld's handpicked successor.

Creative edge

Blazy won widespread praise for his work at Bottega Veneta, helping modernise the look of the classic Italian leather-goods house, making it more playful and daring, while also expanding its product range.

He oversaw the launch of its first fragrances and high-end jewellery, and updated the brand's classic "intrecciato" woven patterns with hit bags such as Kalimero, Andiamo and Sardine.

One of his first projects was designing a pair of US$7,000 jeans from leather printed with a denim pattern that made them look like the cotton versions.

His shows at Milan Fashion Week, attended by celebrities such as Julianne Moore and Jennifer Lawrence, quickly became "a top highlight, consistently among the hottest tickets", noted *The Business of Fashion's* luxury editor Robert Williams.

Chanel is a different scale, however, meaning "the pressure to back up that creative edge with wearable designs is certainly a lot higher", said Williams.

Blazy soft-launched some of his first designs at the Venice Film Festival this year.

British film star Tilda Swinton was seen in loosely cut white trousers and a short-sleeved blouse.

Raf Simons friendship

A heavy smoker, often modestly dressed in just jeans and t-shirt, Blazy collects art and is close friends with Belgian fashion master Raf Simons, a mentor and former boss on two occasions.

Blazy grew up in Paris with his art expert father and historian mother, along with a twin sister and brother.

"Tom Sawyer was my childhood hero," he told *The New York Times* in an interview last year, referring to the free-spirited titular character of Mark Twain's novel.

His own teenage rebelliousness led to him being sent to boarding schools in France and England.

Having obtained his high school diploma, he went on to study fashion at La Cambre art school in Brussels and was hired after graduation by Simons, kickstarting a career that has seen him rapidly rise through major European and American labels.

He first came to public attention while designing as part of an anonymous collective that put together a collection for France's Maison Margiela in 2014.

British fashion journalist Suzy Menkes was so impressed by his work using rare fabrics that she "outed" him in an article in Vogue.

"You can't keep such a talent under wraps," she wrote.

That helped propel him further, leading to jobs at Celine as well as Calvin Klein where he worked under Simons again, this time in New York.

Their two-year stint in the US ended abruptly when they were fired in 2018, leaving Blazy standing in the street with a cardboard box containing his office possessions. – AFP



Among Bottega Veneta staples that Blazy was responsible for is the Baby Sardine mini bag. – ***PICS FROM INSTAGRAM @MATTHIEU_BLAZY***

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EYE-CATCHING EYEWEAR



Boss Eyewear Fall/Winter 2025
Boss Eyewear enriches its signature collection with new, bold sunglasses and optical frames in highly distinctive designs. The new frames are crafted in Acetate Renew, a material that includes 27% recycled content and 43% bio-based content, and the lenses are made with 50% recycled materials. Bold hinges on the thick core wire elevate these styles, which stand out with rich colour treatments. Double-layer combinations and transparent effects make a sophisticated statement, complemented with three-dimensional stripes and a metal Boss logo on the temples.



Carolina Herrera Fall/Winter 2025
The House of Herrera collection welcomes new eyewear creations that reflect confident femininity and modern refinement. Marked by bold yet airy volumes, each design reveals meticulous craftsmanship and contemporary character. Rounded metal studs – inspired by the brand's iconic polka dot motif – accent the lenses, while oversized temples in contrasting acetates are finished with Carolina Herrera medallion end-tips, offering a distinctive and polished signature.



Carrera Fall/Winter 2025
Unconventional and always one step ahead, the Flag Collection is the boldest expression of Carrera and pushes the boundaries of design to the highest peaks of distinctiveness, inspired by the utmost iconic and recognisable details of Carrera, the unmistakable "C" logo. The collection is enriched with a Made-In-Italy capsule featuring a new interpretation of the "Victory C" logo as a "C" plaque on the front borrowed from Carrera archive. The new styles feature sculpted front and bold temples highlighted by the introduction of transparent colours.



Eyewear by David Beckham Fall/Winter 2025
Eyewear by David Beckham's new collection offers timeless designs infused with effortless British sophistication, created with exquisite craftsmanship, high-quality materials and distinctive details. This collection unveils refined new silhouettes that balance versatility with contemporary design and innovative eyewear constructions that embody the brand's philosophy. The collection highlights all the iconic details, such as the Talisman and the DB monogram, which have been signature features of each style since the brand's launch. The FW25 colour palette draws from the warm tones of the season, featuring classic black, warm Havana and premium horn effect offering depth and elegance.



Kate Spade New York Fall/Winter 2025
Kate Spade New York introduces a refined yet playful assortment of sunglasses and optical frames that embody the brand's signature charm, elegance and modern femininity. This season's designs strike a harmonious balance between timeless style and everyday wearability. Thoughtfully crafted, each pair is finished with iconic Kate Spade elements – subtle spade-shaped metal trims, signature sayings such as "Hello Sunshine" and "So Happy to See You" discreetly inscribed on the inside temples, and sophisticated colour stories that range from classic to unexpected.



Levi's Fall/Winter 2025
The collection is the perfect combination of elevated sunglass designs and optical frames, conveying an edgy yet timeless feeling. The Levi's sunglasses and optical frames feature a wide range of functional yet stylish models, evoking the effortlessly cool appeal of the California lifestyle while drawing inspiration from the shades of denim from Levi's seasonal collection, paired with warm gradients of lenses.



Marc Jacobs Fall/Winter 2025
Marc Jacobs introduces new sunglasses and optical frames exuding the unexpected and irreverent spirit of the brand. The shapes are enhanced with bold details: The Sunglasses and The Glasses logo, the iconic J Marc logo on the Contemporary Line and the distinctive double metal trim in the Men's Premium Line. Unique eyewear styles are often offered in bold colour palettes, including a one-of-a-kind model enhanced by playful dots all over.



Tommy Hilfiger Fall/Winter 2025
Tommy Hilfiger showcases sunglasses and optical frames for men and women, with silhouettes ranging from classic and sophisticated to modern and outspoken. The spirit is expressive, but the look remains refined – designed for those who appreciate the classics and know exactly how to make them their own. This seasonal collection serves as a passport into the world of classic prep. It is steeped in tradition but redefined by a contemporary perspective: creative and confident, with a measured sense of ease and freedom to break the rules.

BEAUTY REVIEWS

The Ordinary PHA 5% Exfoliating Lip Serum
Function: Targets textural irregularities, barrier support, dryness and dehydration
Ingredients (key): Gluconolactone, ectoin, glycerin, citric, tartaric and malic acids, black carrot extract
Directions: Use before sleep
Pros: Hydrated and pinkier lips, fewer lip wrinkles
Cons: Consistency of the solution may throw people off
Price: RM50 for 15ml
Rating: 3.5/5



Squalane + Amino Acids Lip Balm
Function: Hydrates lips, elbows and cuticles
Ingredients (key): Squalane, Amino Acids
Directions: Use whenever lips is feeling dry
Pros: Instant moisture, leaving lips smooth and crack-free
Cons: Some may not prefer its thicker consistency
Price: RM65 for 15ml
Rating: 3.5/5





Laneige Glaze Craze Tinted Lip Serum
Function: Deeply hydrate lips, making it visibly plumper with high shine
Ingredients (key): Polypeptides, pomegrante seed oil, argan ceramides
Directions: One coat for sheer-natural look, three coats for more intense colour
Pros: Plumpier, glossier finish, great for a date night
Cons: Needs reapplication every now and then
Price: RM85 for 12g
Rating: 3.5/5

Fwee 3D Voluming Gloss (30%, 70%)
Function: Make lips look glossy and voluminous
Ingredients (key): Anti-oxidants, paraben-free, silicone-free, sulphate-free, vitamins
Directions: Put it over lipstick for a glam look, or over lip balm/bare lips for a natural look
Pros: Comes in two intensities (30%, 70%) for girls who prefer either clean or vivid looks, not sticky after dried
Cons: Requires reapplying, especially after eating
Price: RM67 for 5.3g
Rating: 4/5





Fwee Pink Obsession Stay-fit Lip Tint
Function: Makes lips look pinkier
Ingredients (key): Anti-oxidants, oil-free, paraben-free, sulphate-free, vitamins
Pros: Hydrating and gives a pink finish. Darker shade of pink works on darker skin tones.
Cons: May not be suitable for full glam look
Price: RM67 for 3.8g
Rating: 4/5



The Ordinary Caffeine Solution 5% + EGCG
Function: Ease dark circles, fine lines and wrinkles, pigmentation and dark spots, puffiness
Ingredients (key): AHAs/glycolic acid, fragrance-free, hyaluronic acid, oil-free, paraben-free, sulphate-free
Directions: Massage a drop around each eye every day before applying make-up and before sleep
Pros: Significant reduction of dark circles in the eye contour and eye puffiness
Cons: May sting if does not agree with skin
Price: RM55 for 30ml
Rating: 4.5/5

Dr. Cove Brightening Serum
Function: Supports skin renewal and clarity
Ingredients (key): Niacinamide, sodium hyaluronate, plant-derived actives (kakadu plum extract, licorice rice and fruit AHAs)
Directions: Include in skincare routine, a coin-sized drop for the entire face
Pros: Improves skin texture and restores hydration
Cons: May not work for dry skin type
Price: RM68 for 30ml
Rating: 3/5





Dr. Cove Brightening Body Lotion
Function: Moisturises, soothe and brightens skin
Ingredients (key): Niacinamide, shea butter, coconut oil, rosehip seed oil
Directions: Apply generously all over the body
Pros: Helps smooth rough/flaky skin, repairs skin barrier
Cons: May not work on skin that does not have many issues
Price: RM45 for 180ml
Rating: 2/5

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Ray (left) and Peter.


The Major (Hamill).


Doomed contestant (Davis).

MOVIE REVIEW

Dystopian march

The Long Walk brings Stephen King's dark vision to screen

BY **AMEEN HAZIZI**


From left: Peter (Jonsson), Ray (Cooper), Hank (Wang), Arthur (Tut). – ***ALL PICS FROM IMDB***

YOUNG men sent off to die sounds like a war movie. But *The Long Walk*, directed by Francis Lawrence and adapted from Stephen King's 1979 novel under his Richard Bachman pseudonym, takes that idea into dystopian setting.

King had said Bachman is a creation born from marketing necessity and a personal experiment to see if his success came from talent or luck.

Cast, credits

Directed by Lawrence, best known for *The Hunger Games* film series, *The Long Walk* features a strong ensemble of rising talent. The cast includes Cooper Hoffman, David Jonsson, Mark Hamill, Judy Greer, Ben Wang, Tut Nyuot, Charlie Plummer, Garret Wareing and *Jojo Rabbit* star Roman Griffin Davis.

Rules of deadly game

The story follows 50 teenage boys competing in an annual televised event known as "The Long Walk", hosted by a fascist regime in a dystopian 20th century US ravaged from a past war. The rules are simple and brutal: keep walking at 3mph (4.8km/h) or face execution by armed soldiers. With only three warnings before execution, each participant must last until only one remains. Although voluntary, every young man in the nation applies for *The Long Walk* for the chance of winning an enormous fortune and the ability to have one wish granted by the regime.

Trials of *The Long Walk*

The film opens with Ray Garraty (Hoffman), dropped off at the starting line by his distraught mother (Greer). There he meets Peter McVries (Jonsson) and a cast of competitors including Arthur Barker (Tut), Hank Olson (Wang), the volatile Gary Barkovitch (Plummer) and the cold, unreadable Billy Stebbins (Wareing). Overseeing it all is the menacing Major, played with chilling irony by Hamill.

As the walk progresses, alliances form, rivalries ignite and the weight of the rules settles in. Each death pulls the audience deeper into a relentless march through empty fields, ghost towns and crowds of passersby who either salute out of respect or stare in silence.

Moments of friendship provide flickers of warmth, but under the regime's cruelty, bonds cannot last. Some boys collapse from exhaustion, others surrender to despair and a few fight back in fleeting acts of defiance that feel as haunting as they are futile.

War story without battlefield

Despite its grim story, the film finds light in the quiet conversations between its two leads. Cooper, son of the late Philip Seymour Hoffman, delivers a weary, understated performance as Raymond, letting the audience feel the fatigue creeping into every step. Jonsson, fresh from *Alien: Romulus*, brings a contrasting energy as Peter. His delivery carries warmth and gravity, as if his character has already endured life's hardest trials long before the walk.

The film leans heavily on allegory. Written in the shadow of the Vietnam War, the story reflects the futility of young men sent to die for political games. Unlike Lawrence's *Hunger Games* films, there is no rebellion, no hope, no tearing down the system. Nothing the characters do will change their world and no one is coming to save them.

Even the climax remains deliberately ambiguous, leaving audiences to question whether survival has any meaning in a world where hope itself may be an illusion.

The film does stray from King's original. In the novel the walk began with 100 contestants, and the pace was an even harsher 4mph (6.4km/h). Yet Lawrence preserves the book's bleak spirit, and changes gives audiences a fresh perspective while staying true to its grim core.

With its relentless march and hopeless conclusion, *The Long Walk* is a bleak meditation on friendship, sacrifice and survival. It is a war story without a battlefield.


With its relentless march and hopeless conclusion, *The Long Walk* is a bleak meditation on friendship, sacrifice and survival.

Cast:
Cooper Hoffman, David Jonsson, Mark Hamill, Judy Greer, Ben Wang, Tut Nyuot, Charlie Plummer, Garret Wareing, Roman Griffin Davis.

Director:
Francis Lawrence

E-VALUE 8
ACTING 10
PLOT 8

Labuschagne out, Renshaw returns for Australia

AUSTRALIA batsman Matt Renshaw was given an international lifeline after more than two years in the wilderness yesterday but Marnus Labuschagne was left out of both the ODI and T20 squads for the home series against India.

Renshaw, who last played a Test match in February 2023 – also against India – is in line for his ODI debut at the age of 29.

He has been in prolific form for Queensland and Australia A. He scored a century in the first match of the Sheffield Shield season and battered 248 runs in three one-day games for Australia A against Sri Lanka in July.

He was last selected for the Australian ODI squad in 2022, but never made the starting XI.

Renshaw's Queensland teammate Labuschagne was left out of both the ODI and T20 squads to play India in Australia, starting Oct 19.

Labuschagne scored 160 from 206 balls in the Sheffield Shield match against Tasmania.

That followed a brisk 130 from 118 balls for Queensland in their One-Day Cup opener against Victoria last month.

Chair of selectors George Bailey said there was a need to manage the players' workload ahead of a busy few months.

Australia host England in the Ashes from Nov 21, when Labuschagne will expect to return to the fold despite some lean international form.

"The majority of the T20 squad will remain together as it's an important period in the build towards the World Cup next year," said Bailey.

"However we are trying to strike a balance to ensure we simultaneously prepare certain individuals for the Test series ahead," he added.

Mitchell Starc, who last month announced his retirement from T20 cricket, is back for the ODIs.

Skipper Mitchell Marsh will continue to lead the ODI side in Pat Cummins's absence, while Glenn Maxwell is still nursing a broken wrist and Cameron Green will continue his Test preparations with Western Australia. – AFP

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PERMOHONAN UNTUK PERLAKSANAAN NO: PA-38-1094-08/2025

Dalam perkara mengenai Seksyen 256 dan 257 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965
Dan
Dalam perkara mengenai Gadaian Perserahan No: 0799SC2013011301 (bertarikh : 07/02/2013) ke atas semua bahagian tanah yang dipegang di bawah **Geran No. Hakmilik: 110510, Lot 4383, Mukim Bandar Tanjong Bungah, Daerah Timor Laut, Pulau Pinang**
Dan
Dalam perkara mengenai Aturan 83 Kaedah-Kaedah Mahkamah, 2012

ANTARA
Public Bank Berhad (No. Syarikat : 6463-H) ...PLAINTIF

Ooi Soo See (No. Kad Pengenalan : 630624075710) ...DEFENDAN

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LELONG AWAM
Pada Hari Khamis, 23 Oktober 2025, Pada Jam 11:00 pagi,
SECARA ELEKTRONIK DI LAMAN WEB e-LELONG, PUSAT OPERASI e-LELONG, KOMPLEKS MAHKAMAH KUANTAN, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR

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McLaren need to be accurate with crash review: Stella

BY **PHILIP DUNCAN**

MCLAREN has admitted there is a "lot at stake" as the British team opens its review into the latest crash between world championship rivals Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri.

Norris and Piastri collided for the second time this season on the first lap of Sunday's contest in Singapore.

Norris finished third, one place clear of Piastri, to take three points out of his title lead.

The British driver now trails Piastri by 22 points with 174 points to play for across the final six rounds.

Piastri was annoyed that McLaren did not instruct Norris to give up the place for breaking the so-called "Papaya Rules".

McLaren said Norris could not avoid hitting Piastri after he tagged the back of Max Verstappen's Red Bull.

However, Piastri felt Norris did a "s*** job" in avoiding him, while Norris claimed a driver who would not attempt a similar move "should not be in Formula One".

McLaren team principal Andrea Stella said: "We made our assessment and we decided that the right course of action is the one we took, but part of the process is our review that will happen in the coming days.

"The review needs to be very detailed, very analytical, and it needs to take into account the point of view of our two drivers.

"We will form a common opinion and we will see whether it confirms our initial interpretation, or if there is something else that we should compute.

"But in terms of just 'going for the gap', it is, let's say, too much of a coarse approach.

"We need to retain a higher degree of sophistication and detail because there are so many elements that you need to take into account and we need to make sure we don't become too quick in drawing conclusions.

"We need to be accurate because there is a lot at stake, not only the championship points but the trust of our drivers and the way we operate as a team."

Norris ran into the back of Piastri in Canada in June and immediately took blame for the crash.

The incident in Singapore comes less than a month after Piastri was ordered aside for Norris at the Italian Grand Prix following a slow pit-stop for the Briton – a controversial decision which also angered Piastri.

Stella continued: "This is a reminder that when you are racing as a team, you cannot have exactly the same interests for the two drivers because they want to pursue their aspirations.

"We want to protect this 'let them race' concept, and we know as soon as you adopt this concept you face difficulties.

"But I am very proud of the way Lando and Oscar have been part of the process so far because if we have been able to navigate through these 'difficult' battles of racing, it is because we have Lando and Oscar on board, and they have been great contributors and great individuals and that is why it has been very successful so far.

"We will have a good review, good conversations, and just like after Canada, we will come back stronger and more united." – The Independent


McLaren team principal Andrea Stella. – *AFPPIC*

Papaya rules out the window

McLaren intra-team title battle explodes after Norris' audacious move in Singapore


Norris (left) and Piastri. – *REUTERSPIC*

BY **KIERAN JACKSON**

AFTER faint sparkles in the past 17 races, the dense humidity of the Singapore night sky was where this season's touchpaper was finally lit.

Posing with the hundred or so team members in front of the McLaren garage, celebrating their inevitable constructors' triumph, you wonder what emotions were running through the head of Oscar Piastri.

For a man whose best quality is his serenity in the heat of battle, Piastri boiled over underneath his visor at Marina Bay.

Prodded off-line at turn three by teammate and title rival Lando Norris on lap one, the Australian vented his feelings over team radio to race engineer Tom Stallard.

"So are we cool with Lando just barging me out of the way? What's the go-to there?" Piastri queried.

Cue panic on the faces of team principal Andrea Stella and CEO Zak Brown on the pit wall.

When informed that no intervention would occur, he was apoplectic: "That is not fair. I'm sorry, that is not fair."

Stallard replied: "Oscar, we will have the opportunity to review together afterwards – focus on this race, mate. We can still get a good result here."

But Piastri was having none of it: "But if he (Norris) has to avoid another car by crashing into his teammate, then that is a pretty s*** job of avoiding."

Papaya rules? Out of the window. Clean racing with no contact? Not any more. For what was proving to be the nicest F1 title race in the sport's history, it was a much-needed grenade with six rounds remaining.

Having cooled off, both Norris and Piastri played down the incident afterwards. The added context of Norris's slight touch with Max Verstappen, causing his McLaren to deviate into the second papaya car, meant no investigation was necessary in the eyes of the stewards, nor the McLaren executives.

It was an audacious overtake from Norris. Now trailing by 22 points, it was the sort of do-or-die manoeuvre that can trigger a points swing.

The Bristolian has been criticised all too often for his reluctance to take risks on the track, but here, he threw down the gauntlet to his teammate.

"Anyone on the grid would have done exactly the same thing as I did, so if you fault me for just going on the inside of a big gap, then you should not be in Formula 1," Norris said. "There was nothing wrong with what I did."

There you go then. Statement made. The ramifications are now fascinating.

It'd have been some watch to be a fly on the wall for the McLaren team briefing after the popping of champagne in celebration of their constructors' triumph.

Piastri, managed by ex-Australian F1 driver Mark Webber, who wore his heart on his sleeve on many an occasion, will want an explanation of where this leaves the two drivers in wheel-to-wheel combat heading into the next race in Austin.

Stella and Brown do deserve credit for not labelling either McLaren driver their undisputed No. 1 this season.

They've allowed jousting on track, within the ambiguous "papaya rules" tagline, which reminds the duo they can race each other without any risk of contact, but Norris has just fallen foul of this.

What's to stop Piastri, who we shouldn't forget ceded second place in Monza a month ago after a team request late in the day, from now making decisions in his own self-interest?

The answer, of course, is nothing. The answer, with the constructors' title wrapped up, should be nothing.

Brown, incidentally, labelled the incident "hard racing". He added: "First corner, looks like Max and Lando either touched or had to check up, and so it was clearly an exciting turn three incident.

"Racing, tough racing and you've got three, four cars all stacked up, that's going to happen every once in a while."

Both Piastri and Norris are clearly feeling the heat of the battle, not least with the leaps in performance Red Bull and Mercedes have found in recent weeks.

Max Verstappen, 63 points adrift of Piastri, is not completely out of sight either; the Dutchman did well to take second place behind George Russell in Singapore.

But if Norris needed to ruffle his teammate's feathers, then, at Marina Bay, he did just that. The Brit gambled and it paid off, chipping another three points away from Piastri's lead.

The impact it has on harmony within the McLaren garage remains to be seen. But now, from here on in, the gloves are most certainly off. – The Independent

Mekies taking no credit as Max narrows F1 gap

RED BULL boss Laurent Mekies is refusing to take any credit for the Formula One team's improved performance since the Frenchman replaced Christian Horner at the helm in July.

Four-times world champion Max Verstappen has won twice since Mekies arrived six races ago and has been on the podium in the last four races, finishing second in Singapore last weekend.

Before Zandvoort, a home race where he finished second, Verstappen had not been on the podium for four races.

"It's still zero, guys. It's still zero," Mekies told reporters in Singapore when asked how much credit he felt he could take for the turnaround.

"The improvement in performance is very basically due to the work of everyone trying to analyse the limitations of the car, race after race.

"What is stopping us from exploiting the potential of the car? How can we add performance to the car? Where do we need to add performance for it to convert into lap time?"

Verstappen has gone from being 104 points behind McLaren's championship leader Oscar Piastri after the Dutch Grand Prix at the end of August to 63 adrift of the Australian following Sunday's race.

With six grands prix and three Saturday sprint races remaining, Verstappen is still in the title reckoning although very much a long shot.

"I think Laurent is probably being too nice," the champion said of Mekies' words, with Red Bull consultant Helmut Marko earlier saying the boss was 'too humble'.

"At the end of the day, what is very good is that we just approach it as a proper team effort. We always tried to look into the details.

"We tried to understand what our weaknesses were. And since a few races it's definitely picked up a lot.

"I do think that now we understand why or how we can be better. By asking the right questions, including Laurent being involved in that, it's just working well." – Reuters

SIDENETTING

Mbappe undergoing treatment: Deschamps

KYLIAN MBAPPE is receiving treatment for a "small niggle" in his right ankle after meeting up with his international teammates ahead of the latest round of 2026 World Cup qualifiers, France coach Didier Deschamps said yesterday. The France captain sustained the knock at the end of Real Madrid's 3-1 La Liga victory over Villarreal on Saturday, casting doubts over his availability to the national team for their upcoming qualifying matches against Azerbaijan and Iceland. "I spoke with Kylian, he had a small niggle but it's not serious, otherwise he wouldn't be here today," Deschamps told reporters at the French team's Clairefontaine base near Paris. "We will take the time with the medical staff to assess the situation and then see how it develops." *Les Bleus* host Azerbaijan on Friday at PSG's Parc des Princes stadium before travelling to Iceland three days later.

… urges Mateta to compete for spot

CRYSTAL PALACE forward Jean-Philippe Mateta was called up to the French squad because of his "good habit" of scoring goals but the 28-year-old will still have to prove himself on the pitch and in training, coach Didier Deschamps said. Mateta scored 17 goals in all competitions last season as Palace won the FA Cup to lift the first major trophy of their 164-year-old history. He has previously played in France's youth teams and featured at the Paris Olympic Games last year, winning a silver medal. "He has to do what he knows how to do, which is to play as naturally as possible," Deschamps told reporters yesterday. "He has a good habit of scoring goals… so this is a big moment for him. He has to prove himself in the team, in training and during matches."

Rodri to miss Spain World Cup qualifier

MIDFIELDER Rodri will miss Spain's World Cup qualifiers against Georgia and Bulgaria due to injury, the Spanish soccer federation (RFEF) said yesterday. The Manchester City midfielder, who returned in May after eight months out due to a serious knee injury, was forced off in the first half of Sunday's 1-0 Premier League win at Brentford. "The decision follows medical reports provided by his club to the RFEF medical staff," the RFEF said in a statement. City manager Pep Guardiola said last week that Rodri, who won the *Ballon d'Or* last year, was unable to play three games per week, as his knee needed at least a year to fully recover. Spain, who won both their Group E qualifiers last month, host Georgia on Saturday and Bulgaria on Oct 14.

Passport woes for Depay

NETHERLANDS' record scorer Memphis Depay 3will miss his country's World Cup qualifier away to Malta tomorrow after saying his passport was stolen in Brazil, where he plays for Corinthians. Depay, 31, broke Robin van Persie's record with two goals in the 3-2 victory away to Lithuania in the Netherlands' last Group G qualifier, taking him to 52, but will miss a chance to boost his tally against Malta, who the Dutch beat 8-0 at home in June. He is expected to leave on Monday for Amsterdam having missed his scheduled Sunday departure. "The plan I had in mind for this week will ultimately change somewhat because of this," coach Ronald Koeman told a press conference yesterday. "He won't start, no. Memphis couldn't find his passport in Brazil, he went to the airport without one but that didn't work, even if you're Memphis," Koeman quipped.

Courting trouble

Intensity of tennis schedule adds to 'brutal' week in Shanghai

BY **JAMIE BRAIDWOOD**

SOMEWHERE in Spain, Carlos Alcaraz can put his feet up and reflect on what appears to be a rather wise decision. While the World No 1 rests after winning the Japan Open title, he can do so safely away from the "brutal" conditions at the Shanghai Masters, where extreme heat and humidity has blown the draw wide open.

Jannik Sinner is out after retiring from his third-round match against Tallon Griekspoor due to painful cramp.

Novak Djokovic battled through, but only after throwing up on court during his gruelling win over Yannick Hanfmann on Sunday.

Alcaraz pulled out of Shanghai, one of the ATP's premier 1000 events, in order to protect the left ankle injury he sustained during his run to the Tokyo title.

But even with a fully fit ankle, and without the extreme weather, Alcaraz could have foreseen such a situation unfolding as we enter perhaps the most demanding stretch of the tennis season and many players realise their tanks are close to empty.

The nature of the new 12-day Masters events, of which Shanghai is one of the seven expanded tournaments played across the ATP season, asks even more of the players who go on a deep run the previous week.

Alcaraz won the Japan Open title last Tuesday, Sinner won his China Open title on Wednesday, the same day the Shanghai Masters began.

As top seeds, both players received byes to the second round, but the relentless nature of the schedule comes at a time when players are feeling the effects of a long season anyway.

Sinner's retirement was the seventh of the week in Shanghai, to add to a string of injury-curtailed matches from Beijing before then.

Meanwhile, on the WTA Tour, the World No. 19 Daria Kasatkina became the latest player to end her season early.

"The truth is, I've hit a wall and can't continue," the Russian-born Kasatkina, who now represents Australia, wrote on *Instagram*.

"I need a break. A break from the monotonous daily grind of life on the tour, the suitcases, the results, the pressure, the same faces (sorry, girls), everything that comes with this life.

"The schedule is too much, mentally and emotionally I am at breaking point and sadly, I am not alone."

Elina Svitolina and Beatriz Haddad Maia have also opted to end their seasons early in order to rest, with Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff adding to the criticism of the schedule as they enter the final weeks of the year.

World No. 2 Swiatek called the season "too long and too intense" and suggested she could skip some mandatory events.



As a grand slam champion this season and with plenty of ranking points and prize money already banked, Swiatek is at least in a position to do this.

The WTA has mandatory requirements for top players to enter all 10 WTA 1000 tournaments and six WTA 500 events.

The World No 1 Aryna Sabalenka, though, opted to skip the China Open in Beijing and will enter the Wuhan tournament this week refreshed from almost a month off after winning the US Open title.

"I think we made the right decision to take extra time for recovery and for the preparation," Sabalenka said after arriving in Wuhan. "Physically, I feel ready to go."

Alcaraz is likely to feel a similar benefit once Shanghai is concluded, as the 22-year-old targets a strong end to the season and his first ATP Tour Finals title.

Although complaints about the tennis schedule run a little thin when Alcaraz, Sinner and Djokovic have signed up to the lucrative Six Kings Slam exhibition in Saudi Arabia, to be played next week.

And in the last-16 in Shanghai, it can feel like there are players strewn across the draw who are not only battling against the conditions but their own fatigue, mental and physical.

The exception, perhaps, will be the 38-year-old Djokovic, who chose not to play in any tournaments in between Roland Garros, Wimbledon and the US Open.

He, too, is in the privileged position of not needing to chase ranking points or prize money, but it could be remarkably telling if Djokovic's less-is-more approach proves successful at this challenging point of the year. – The Independent



Germany's Alexander Zverev hits a return to France's Arthur Rinderknech (not pictured) at the Shanghai Masters yesterday. – *AFPPIC*

'Terrible' Zverev dumped out of Shanghai

WORLD NO. 3 Alexander Zverev said he was playing "terrible tennis" after he was knocked out of the Shanghai Masters by France's Arthur Rinderknech 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 yesterday.

His exit leaves Novak Djokovic as the tournament's top-ranked player, increasing the 38-year-old Serb's chances of winning a record-extending fifth title in the Chinese financial hub.

In stifling conditions, the 54th-ranked Rinderknech came back from a set down to stun an increasingly rattled Zverev into submission.

It is the second time the Frenchman has beaten him, after bundling him out of Wimbledon earlier this year.

A despondent Zverev told reporters the match had been "nothing unusual for me, unfortunately, these days".

"Just no confidence, no belief in the shots… My year has been terrible, I'm just playing terrible tennis all round," he said, visibly emotional.

The German had injured his big toe towards the end of his last match in Shanghai but yesterday showed no sign of discomfort as he broke Rinderknech in the third game with a forehand.

He nearly went ahead early in the second set, but Rinderknech recovered his composure and broke in the fourth game.

"I'm not very sure (how I managed to turn the game around)," he said.

"I fought like hell, tried everything. (Zverev) is such a good player... I knew it was going to be a battle.

"Starting in the second set… I was able to be offensive at the right moment, in a smarter way," he said.

Keeping up the momentum, in the third set the 30-year-old broke in the third game.

Zverev had to pause to change his shoes because sweat was pouring out of them, as spectators wafted fans and wore cool packs on their foreheads to counter the suffocating humidity.

But switching footwear was not enough to save the German, and a double fault in the seventh game led to Rinderknech breaking again.

Holding with an ace to win, the Frenchman lolled his body in delighted disbelief, then danced around the court in glee.

Zverev's loss means world No. 5 Djokovic now leads ranking-wise as the tournament heads into the last 16, with the 24-time Grand Slam winner facing Spain's Jaume Munar overnight.

Alex de Minaur is the next highest seed after Djokovic through to the fourth round, comfortably getting past Poland's Kamil Majchrzak 6-1, 7-5.

The Australian will next meet Portugal's Nuno Borges, who put an end to the hopes of home favourite Shang Juncheng 7-6 (7-5), 4-6, 6-3.

Daniil Medvedev, the 2019 Shanghai champion, is through too, after beating Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-3, 7-6 (7-5).

He will once again take on US teenager Learner Tien, who defeated him last week in the China Open semifinal.

The 19-year-old beat Britain's Cameron Norrie 7-6 (7-4), 6-3 to make the last 16 yesterday. – AFP

'Egyptian King' under fire

Salah's lethargic display against Chelsea highlights growing concern as influence wanes

MOHAMED SALAH is Liverpool's "Egyptian King", but the forward's crown has lost a little of its lustre during a disappointing spell in which his work ethic has come under fire.

Salah was below his best again in Liverpool's damaging 2-1 defeat at Chelsea on Saturday as he wasted several chances and failed to help out in defence.

He has been absent from the scoresheet in five of Liverpool's seven Premier League games this season and the champions have suffered as a result.

The loss at Stamford Bridge was Liverpool's third in eight days as Arsenal leapfrogged them to the top of the table.

Salah has scored just three goals and provided three assists in nine appearances in all competitions this season.

Even more alarming than Salah's statistics, mediocre by his stellar standards, was the sight of the 33-year-old taking little interest when Liverpool were under seige against Chelsea.

Without any protection from the forward, Liverpool right-back Conor Bradley was hauled off at half-time after earning a booking as he struggled to keep Chelsea at bay.

The killer ball for Estevao Willian's stoppage-time winner came from Salah's right flank, with Marc Cucurella advancing unchecked to set up the Brazilian's goal.

Cucurella revealed Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca told them exploit the defensive space vacated by Salah.

"We know that Salah is always ready for the counter-attack so we practised that and the manager said that the space might be there," he said.

Salah's lethargic display was in keeping with a major dip in form since the closing stages of last season.

He scored 29 goals in 38 league matches, earning the Premier League Golden Boot as Liverpool powered to a record-equalling 20th English title.

But after scoring twice in a 3-1 win against Southampton in March, Salah's influence has waned.

He netted just twice in his last 11 games in all competitions, with Liverpool crashing out of the Champions League against Paris Saint-Germain during his power outage.

After Liverpool clinched the title, Salah boasted he had convinced Reds boss Arne Slot to let him concentrate on scoring and creating at the expense of defending.

"I told him as long as you rest me defensively, I will provide offensively. I will show you the numbers. So I'm glad that I did," he said.

But giving Salah so much freedom is starting to backfire as opponents expose the gaping holes left by that plan.

Former Manchester United and England star Wayne Rooney has joined the growing chorus of disapproval over Salah's work rate.

"We know he doesn't always get back and defend as much. But in the Chelsea game his fullback is getting torn apart and he's watching," he said on the *BBC's Wayne Rooney Show*.

"When it's going well and you are scoring goals, the team will put up with that. But over the last week I'd question his work ethic.

"Those leaders in that dressing room should be telling him 'You need to help out.' He's looked a little bit lost over the last week."

Former Liverpool midfielder Danny Murphy agrees with Rooney.

"It feels like Salah's lack of defensive work has become a little problem for Liverpool, especially against the better teams," he said.

Slot must solve the issue if Liverpool are to emerge from their malaise.

Intriguingly, he left Salah on the bench for the first hour of the Champions League defeat at Galatasaray last week, while conceding that decision might have led to his lack of sharpness against Chelsea.

"That's interesting. Did he create so much because he didn't play during the week or did he miss the chances because he missed a bit of sharpness that he could have had if he would played against Galatasaray? We will never know," the Dutchman said.

For now, Slot is preaching patience as he looks to get Salah back on track.

"It's not like every chance he gets is always a goal," Slot said. "We feel sometimes it is, because of what he has done so many times. But yeah he is a human being." – AFP



Mohamed Salah

Isak says 'working hard to get back to best form'



ALEXANDER ISAK *(pic)* has admitted he is still building towards 100% fitness after his second Premier League start for Liverpool also ended in defeat in Saturday's 2-1 loss to Chelsea.

Isak sealed a £125 million (RM725m) switch from Newcastle United on deadline day (Sept 1) after missing out on a proper pre-season at St James' Park due to refusing to train or play for the Magpies.

Following an injury that ruled him out of Newcastle's Far East tour in July, Isak trained with former club Real Sociedad without the Magpies' management's consent. He was made to train in isolation upon his return to Tyneside.

Since joining Liverpool, the 26-year-old has been following a specific fitness regime devised by Arne Slot and his conditioning team at the AXA Training Centre.

The Reds' manager recently acknowledged that the No. 9 won't be considered completely match-ready until after the October international break.

Isak played a part in Liverpool's equaliser at Stamford Bridge, setting up Cody Gakpo's leveller with a clever touch, and reflecting on his 74-minute outing in the capital, the striker commented: "I feel good.

"I've been working hard to get back to my best and I'm still working to get to my best form. It was good to play out there again.

"I was hoping for a different result but we'll keep working. I'm very excited for the whole season ahead.

"Game by game we have to improve of course if we want to achieve the things we want to. But yeah, really excited (for the Manchester United game).

"I think we started off pretty badly and we worked our way into the game pretty well.

"We came out second half and really gave everything to get a result. In the end, it's obviously tough conceding in the last minute like that.

"We were speaking (about) details in our press and also on the ball, the spaces to find to be able to hurt them.

"I think we created chances, enough to score and it just wasn't enough today. In the same way that winning like this is the best feeling, it's the worst to lose in this type of way. It's pretty normal.

"We just have to keep working hard, bounce back and get back to winning ways. I think the belief is there that we can (improve results).

"This team has shown that many times. It's never easy of course, but hard work and working on details and getting back to our best – we have that belief." – Express Newspapers

Sesko's exciting vow ahead of Liverpool clash

MANCHESTER UNITED centre-forward Benjamin Sesko has vowed to "come to this level soon" after scoring for the club for the second time against Sunderland.

The Slovenian striker scored the second goal in a 2-0 victory over the Black Cats at Old Trafford.

Sesko was quick off the mark, poking home a goal at the Stretford End in the 31st minute, extending United's lead after Mason Mount's opening goal.

His celebration saw him leaping into the air, and he expressed his joy during a post-match interview with *MUTV* as he pledged to keep improving. "It feels amazing," he said.

"It feels even better because I helped the team win the game. Because in the end, it's important to win the match. I try to help the team as much as possible."

"The atmosphere afterwards (following the second goal) was unbelievable. It's something I've been dreaming about – jumping high in the stadium like that. My dream came true.

"It's my job to try to score as many goals as possible, try to win the game, try to help the team in every single situation and hopefully I get more moments like this."

When asked if fans have seen the best of him yet, Sesko responded: "No, not yet. There's loads to come.

"I'm still getting used to it more and more to read the players, to be connected with them even more. I believe I can be even better and I will try to show that."

Discussing the contrast between the Premier League and Bundesliga, Sesko explained – ahead of a showdown with Liverpool after the international break: "I would say it's way quicker and you have less time in general.

"This is one of the biggest changes, I would say. Everyone is really physical and athletic, but I'm getting used to it. I'll come to this level soon.

"To play for a club like this, even train every day, is an obvious pleasure and I'm looking forward to being back (after the international break)."

Sesko's goal helped relieve some of the pressure on Ruben Amorim following a disappointing defeat to Brentford last weekend, helping United ascend into the top half of the Premier League table.

United secured Sesko's services for £66.4 million (RM385m) plus £7.3 million (RM42m) in add-ons from RB Leipzig.

During his two-year tenure with Leipzig, Sesko netted 39 goals in 87 appearances. – Express Newspapers


Benjamin Sesko. – *REUTERSPIC*

Queiroz can lead Oman to first World Cup: Muhsen

OMAN striker Muhsen Al-Ghassani has backed former Real Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz to lead the Gulf state to their first-ever World Cup as the country prepares for the next phase of Asia's preliminaries for the 2026 finals.

The Omanis take on Qatar in Group A of the fourth round of the continent's qualifiers in Doha today before facing off against the United Arab Emirates three days later in the battle for one of Asia's two remaining World Cup slots.

The group winners will join Japan, South Korea, Australia, Iran, Uzbekistan and Jordan in securing a ticket for the finals at the first 48-team finals and Muhsen has backed the wily Queiroz to make a difference.

"He's a big coach, he has experience," Muhsen said of Queiroz, who is attempting to book his fifth World Cup appearance after featuring three times with Iran and once with his native Portugal.

"He's worked with us for about three months and he's worked well and he's helping us to go to the World Cup hopefully.

"It's a good chance for us, for my country to make history. We're prepared for these games and we can do it."

Oman, currently ranked 78th in the world, have never qualified for the World Cup while the Qataris are attempting to progress through the preliminaries for the first time having previously appeared as hosts in 2022.

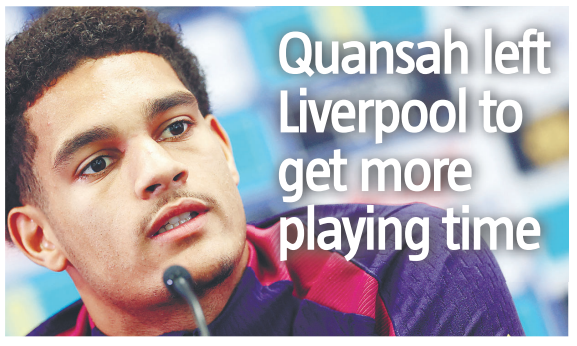
The UAE will be attempting to book a return to the finals 36 years after their only previous appearance, in Italy in 1990.

"We have to focus and we have to be patient," said Muhsen. "We have to fight together and, I tell you, we can do it. All my teammates have confidence and they have worked well to take this chance."

The battle for the other automatic World Cup berth will be held in Jeddah, where six-times qualifiers Saudi Arabia will kick off the fourth round against Patrick Kluivert-coached Indonesia today.

Iraq, led by former Australia coach Graham Arnold, complete the line-up in Group B.

The winners of each group advance directly to the World Cup with the runners-up facing off in November over two legs to determine which nation will appear in an intercontinental playoff in March for the last remaining berth. – Reuters



ENGLAND defender Jarell Quansah *(above)* left Liverpool for Germany's Bayer Leverkusen in search of more game time and a new challenge in a different environment, he said yesterday.

The 22-year-old, who is in the England squad for two games this month, made 58 appearances for Liverpool but only four last season before signing a five-year contract with the Bundesliga club.

"I just wanted to keep progressing in a way where, as a young centreback, you need games to improve," Quansah told a press conference at St. George's Park.

"I've obviously been learning off some of the best players around me at the time at Liverpool, and being able to do that has been so good for my career.

"But at this point in my career, I'm 22 turning 23 and I'm going to be needing hundreds of games to be where I want to be at the end of the day."

Quansah has played every minute of all nine Leverkusen games this season, and scored on his Bundesliga debut in a 2-1 win over Hoffenheim.

"It's been good for myself to make that step and go abroad," Quansah said. "When you're at a team like Liverpool, it's not promised, because world-class players are all over the pitch.

"I just wanted somewhere where I know they can trust that I might make mistakes at times and I can develop under that and just keep pushing and keep pushing."

Quansah was part of the England team that won the European U-21 Championship in June, and while he has been selected for five previous senior squads, he has yet to make his debut.

England host Wales in a friendly tomorrow at Wembley before heading to Riga to play Latvia in a World Cup qualifier on Oct 14. A victory combined with a draw in the match between Serbia and Albania would guarantee England qualify for the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada as group winners. – Reuters

Be meticulous, FAM warned

Technical details crucial in Fifa appeal: Mohd Saifuddin

THE Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) has been advised to pay close attention to technical requirements, including time zones, when filing its appeal against Fifa's decision to sanction the national body and seven heritage players over falsified eligibility documents.

Former FAM secretary-general Mohd Saifuddin Abu Bakar said the matter was crucial to ensure that the appeal is not rejected due to delays or failure to comply with the world football governing body's technical guidelines.

"When Fifa issues a letter, it will state whether the decision can be appealed. If it can, the appeal must be filed within the stipulated time frame.

"FAM must be very careful with the timing, whether it follows Swiss time or local time. Even a one-minute delay could cause Fifa to reject the appeal, so they must be extremely meticulous," he told *Bernama* when contacted yesterday.

Mohd Saifuddin said Fifa would first determine whether the appeal is admissible before proceeding to issue a final ruling.

He said if FAM remains dissatisfied with the outcome, it could still take the case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) as a last resort.

"Whatever it is, we have to wait for the appeal decision. We don't know what documents Fifa has and what we have – both sets of documents will be compared," he said.

FAM have refuted Fifa's findings, saying that the description provided in the world body's judgment is inaccurate and that the seven mixed-heritage players did not knowingly use falsified documents.

"As explained previously, the mistake occurred due to an administrative error when a staff member accidentally uploaded documents from an agent rather than the official documents from NRD," the statement read.

FAM confirmed that an official appeal is being prepared and will include authentic, government-certified documents to support its case.

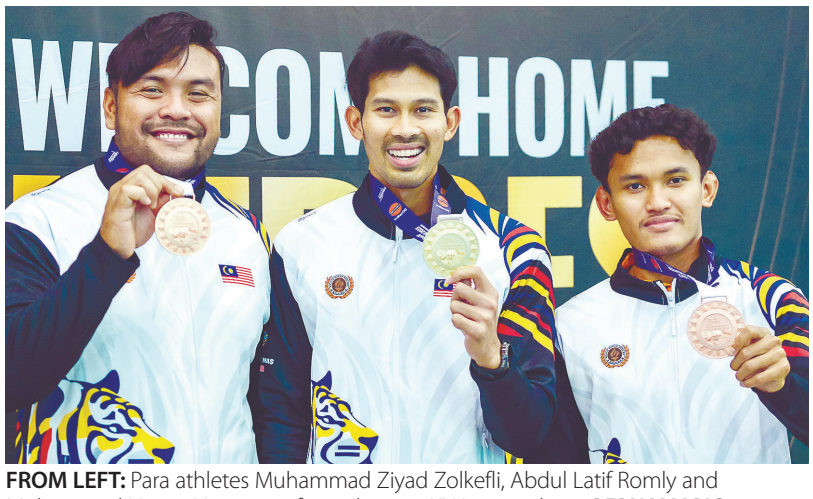
"The official appeal is now being prepared using the original, verified documents issued by the Malaysian government."

The association reiterated their commitment to defending the integrity of Malaysian football and to presenting factual, verifiable evidence throughout the appeal process.

"FAM remain committed to defending the integrity of national football based on facts and authentic documentation."

Meanwhile, Asian Football Confederation (AFC) secretary-general Datuk Seri Windsor Paul John said the confederation will adopt a cautious stance on the Harimau Malaya squad's participation in the 2027 Asian Cup Qualifiers, pending the outcome of FAM's appeal. – Bernama

SHORTS



FROM LEFT: Para athletes Muhammad Ziyad Zolkefli, Abdul Latif Romly and Muhammad Nazmi Nasri pose for a photo at KLIA yesterday. – ***BERNAMAPIC***

Abdul Latif tops rewards list

PARA long jumper Datuk Abdul Latif Romly has topped the list of recipients under the Sports Victory Reward Scheme (Shakam) with a RM79,333 incentive for his gold medal feat at last month's 2025 World Para Athletics Championships in New Delhi.

National Sports Council director-general Jefri Ngadirin said Abdul Latif would receive RM69,333 for winning the F20 (intellectual impairment) long jump event and an additional RM10,000 for setting a new world record of 7.67m.

"So the total amount he (Abdul Latif) will receive is RM79,333. As for Muhammad Ziyad Zolkefli in the F20 (intellectual impairment) shot put event, he will receive RM8,000 for the bronze, while Muhammad Nazmi Nasri will receive RM16,000 for his bronze in the T37 (physical impairment) long jump," he said.

Jefri said this at a press conference after a ceremony to welcome home the national para athletics heroes and heroines from the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) Terminal 1 yesterday.

Abdul Latif said his next goal is to achieve success at the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Para Games, both scheduled for next year.

"I'm grateful to have regained my previous performance level this year and to have redeemed last year's disappointment. Next, I'll prepare for the Commonwealth and Asian Para Games.

"My aim next year is to defend my Asian Para Games gold medal for the fourth consecutive time, and after that, to focus on LA28 (Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games)," said Abdul Latif.

LTdL retains ProSeries status

THE Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) has agreed to retain the ProSeries status for the Le Tour de Langkawi (LTdL) road cycling race for another three years, from 2026 to 2028.

UCI vice-president Datuk Amarjit Singh said the decision was officially published in the UCI calendar, marking a significant achievement for Malaysia in continuing to be recognised as one of the best race organisers on the international cycling circuit.

"This is clear proof that the UCI has full confidence in our country's capability to organise LTdL efficiently, professionally and without any issues," Amarjit, who is also president of the Malaysian National Cycling Federation (PKBM), said in a statement yesterday.

He said discussions with UCI president David Lappartient also emphasised the importance of LTdL as one of Asia's premier races and the need to maintain its ProSeries status.

"I stressed to him that LTdL is not just another race – it is a symbol of growth and progress for the sport of cycling in Asia.

"I am pleased that he fully agreed and gave his strong support for the race to remain in the UCI ProSeries calendar for the next three years," he said.

KBS seeks bigger budget for sports

THE Youth and Sports Ministry (KBS) hopes that Budget 2026 will continue to prioritise the youth and sports sectors by strengthening existing allocations to implement various development initiatives nationwide.

Minister Hannah Yeoh said the ministry has submitted a comprehensive wishlist to the Finance Ministry (MOF) for consideration in the upcoming budget.

She said the wishlist includes requests to maintain the Sports Matching Grant, Community Sports Fund and constituency allocations that have proven effective in driving grassroots development, as well as increased funding for the Road to Gold (RTG) programme and para-athlete development.

"I hope that all the items in KBS's wishlist will be considered by the Finance Ministry. We understand that many other ministries are also submitting their own requests, but we have outlined our priorities," she said.

She said this when asked about KBS's expectations for Budget 2026 at a press conference held during the welcoming ceremony for the national para athletics heroes and heroines from the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) Terminal 1 yesterday.

Elaborating further, Yeoh said KBS wants more international tournaments to be hosted in Malaysia to give local athletes, especially upcoming talents, greater exposure.

"Next year is also Visit Malaysia 2026, so it would be timely for us to host more international sporting events. When we're the host, our young athletes get the chance to compete at a higher level without having to travel abroad," she said.

For the youth sector, Hannah said KBS has also requested additional funding to strengthen the *Rakan Muda* programme and to produce more young leaders ahead of the new policy taking effect on Jan 1, 2026, which will revise the age limit for youth association leadership.

"We want to see more leaders under 30, especially from rural areas, take charge of youth movements. So, budgetary support is crucial to ensure a smooth transition," she said.

Budget 2026 is scheduled to be tabled in Parliament on Friday by Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. – Bernama

SCAN ME

theSun Sports

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Forgery!

'Heritage' players' grandparents not born in Malaysia, says Fifa

THE International Federation of Association Football (Fifa) has concluded that several players under the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) made use of forged documents to evade and circumvent its regulations to be eligible to represent Harimau Malaya.

According to investigatory reports by the Fifa Disciplinary Committee (the Secretariat), they found a list of evidence on the players, which contrasted with the one filed by the FAM respectively in the proceedings.

"The results of the investigations were set out in two reports ," it said.

It said the Secretariat was able to gather a copy of the original birth certificates of the grandmother or grandfather of the players involved, which indicated their original places of birth as: Maria Belen Concepcion Martin (Santa Cruz de la Palma, Spain), Carlos Rogelio Fernandez (Villa Maria Selva, Santa Fe de la Cruz, Argentina), Omar Eli Holgado Gardon (Caseros, Buenos Aires, Argentina), Concepcion Agueda Alaniz (Roldan, Argentina), Nair de Oliveira (Abre Campo, Brazil), Gregorio Irazabal y Lamiquiz (Villa de Guernica y Luno, Viscaya, Spain) and Hendrik Jan Hevel (The Hague, Netherlands).

However, it said the one filed by FAM indicated that Concepion Martin was bron in Malacca, Rogelio Fernandez (Penang), Holgado Gardon (Georgetown), Agueda Alaniz (Penang), De Oliveira (Johor), Irazabal y Lamiquiz (Kuching) and Jan Hevel (Malacca Straits Settlements).

Earlier yesterday, FAM confirmed receiving the full written judgement from Fifa regarding the decision to suspend the seven heritage players for allegedly violating its disciplinary code.

FAM, in a statement, announced that it will now formally lodge an appeal through the proper legal channels, as all supporting evidence is complete and ready for immediate submission to Fifa.

FAM stated that it takes particular issue with several of the conclusions drawn by Fifa, especially the allegation that the players obtained falsified documents or deliberately attempted to circumvent eligibility rules.

Last month, FAM and the seven heritage players were sanctioned by Fifa's Disciplinary Committee after being found to have violated Article 22 of the Fifa Disciplinary Code in relation to the falsification of documents.

In its statement, Fifa alleged that FAM had submitted falsified documents to verify the players' eligibility, which subsequently allowed them to feature in the third round of the 2027 Asian Cup qualifiers against Vietnam on June 10.

The seven sanctioned players are Gabriel Felipe Arrocha, Facundo Garces, Rodrigo Holgado, Imanol Machuca, Joao Figueiredo, Jon Irazabal and Hector Hevel.

As a result, FAM has been fined CHF350,000 (RM1.85 million), while each player has been fined CHF2,000 (approximately RM10,600) and handed a 12-month suspension from all football-related activities, effective from the decision's date of notification.

Meanwhile Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh said she takes seriously the Grounds of Judgement issued yesterday by Fifa regarding action taken against FAM and the seven players.

Yeoh said Fifa's statement in the 19-page document was serious and damaging to the country's image.

She said there were many areas that needed improvement based on Fifa's findings in the document.

"Although FAM has issued a statement saying it was a technical error, a mistake by their staff, all of that needs improvement because the 19-page statement contains very serious remarks by Fifa, which tarnish the country's image.

"And I also understand that all local football fans are naturally angry, disappointed and want to see improvements," she said at a press conference after welcoming home the national para-athletics heroes and heroines from the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) Terminal 1 yesterday.

At the same time, Yeoh said the Youth and Sports Ministry maintains its position of waiting until the appeal process is completed before issuing any official statement.

"FAM must complete this appeal process before we make any special announcement... because the appeal process is not over yet.

"After the Grounds of Judgement, I was informed that FAM has three days to state its intention to appeal, followed by five days to file the appeal," she said.

Yeoh also called on local football fans to continue supporting the Harimau Malaya squad, which will play two Group F matches in the 2027 Asian Cup qualifiers against Laos — in Vientiane tomorrow and in Kuala Lumpur next Tuesday. – Bernama



Papaya rules out the window

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'Egyptian King' under fire

Story on page 30



Abdul Latif tops rewards list

Para athlete Datuk Abdul Latif Romly shows off the gold medal he won upon arriving at KLIA Terminal 1 yesterday after participating in the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships in New Delhi, India last September.

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