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Surge in initiatives cancelled, delayed or not started raises serious questions about effectiveness of management and accountability across ministries, particularly in Education Ministry.



EMOTIONAL WELCOME ... One of the 23 Malaysian volunteers detained by Israeli forces during the Global Sumud Flotilla mission is greeted by a relative on arrival at the KL International Airport. – ***ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN***

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Anwar condemns latest interception of Gaza aid flotilla

'Detaining ships delivering relief to Palestinians inhumane, violates basic principles of human rights and universal humanitarian dignity.'

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PM condemns latest interception of Gaza aid ships

Detention of nine Malaysians by Israeli forces being closely monitored, says communications minister

BY **HARITH KAMAL**
AND **QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI**
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has condemned the interception of humanitarian aid ships from the Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC) and Thousand Madleens to Gaza (TMTG), which included Malaysian volunteers, by Israeli forces in international waters at about 10.50am Malaysian time yesterday.

"I strongly condemn this provocative act and violation of international law.

"The act of detaining humanitarian ships bringing aid for the people of Gaza is inhumane and violates the basic principles of human rights and universal humanitarian dignity," he said in a Facebook post.

He demanded that all Malaysian activists and volunteers be released immediately, given proper protection and not subjected to mistreatment while in detention.

"The Madani government will do its utmost to safeguard the lives of all Malaysians involved in this humanitarian mission and will work with partner countries and international organisations to secure their release as soon as possible."

Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil said the government is closely monitoring the detention of nine Malaysians by Israeli forces and is prepared to act through the highest diplomatic channels.

He said Wisma Putra is following the matter closely and is ready to take action should the same process experienced by activists in the Global Sumud Flotilla mission recur.

"I believe, *Insya-Allah*, Wisma Putra is monitoring the issue and is prepared to take the necessary steps, including through top-level diplomacy and our relations with several countries that have diplomatic ties with Israel.

"We are waiting for further reports because, if Israel detains and processes them in the same manner, we would certainly receive some feedback," he said during a press conference after the Letter of Appointment Handover Ceremony for members of Bernama's Supervisory Council and Board of Governors yesterday.

All nine vessels from the FFC and TMTG humanitarian mission were expected to enter the red zone at 5pm Malaysian time yesterday.

However, Humanitarian Care Malaysia (MyCare) confirmed that the flotilla, including the *Conscience* and *Umm Saad* vessels, which were carrying nine Malaysians, was intercepted by Israeli forces before it could proceed further.

"Eight Malaysians were on board the *Conscience* and one was on the *Umm Saad*," MyCare said, adding that further details were still being verified.

The *Conscience*, which departed from Porto Otranto in Italy on Sept 30, is led by Mohd Alauddin and carries doctors Dr Fauziah Mohd Hassan, Dr Hafiz Sulaiman and Dr Ili Syakira Mohd Suhaimi, lecturers Prof Dr Mohd Afandi Salleh and Dr Noorhasyimah Ismail, MyCare Board of Trustees member Norsham Abu Bakar and Astro Awani journalist Syafik Shukri Abdul Jalil.

Another Malaysian, Dr Maziah Muhammad, is aboard the *Umm Saad*, which left Catania in Sicily on Sept 27 with seven other vessels en route to Gaza.

The FFC and TMTG flotilla was reportedly attacked and illegally intercepted by the Israeli military some 120 nautical miles (220km) from Gaza.

According to initial reports, the unarmed crew, which included doctors, journalists and elected officials, were abducted and more than US$110,000 (RM518,000) worth of aid supplies destined for Gaza's civilian population was seized.

The current whereabouts of the crew and the seized supplies remain unknown.

The flotilla is part of a humanitarian peace mission organised by the FFC in collaboration with TMTG to deliver aid and raise awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which remains under Israeli blockade.

In total, the mission involves about 150 participants from 25 countries, with MyCARE leading the Malaysian delegation.

Local GSF participants return home

BY **FAIZ RUZMAN**
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SEPANG: Chants of "Allahu Akbar" and "Free, Free Palestine" filled the arrival hall of the KL International Airport (KLIA) on Tuesday night as 23 Malaysians detained by Israeli forces during the Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) mission returned home.

Families and supporters waving Palestinian flags began gathering from as early as 8pm, some travelling in chartered buses.

The crowd erupted into cheers when the group appeared at 10.07pm, their arrival marking the end of a month-long ordeal that tested their resolve and unity.

The Malaysians were part of more than 500 activists from 45 countries who joined the GSF to challenge Israel's blockade of Gaza and deliver humanitarian aid.

Their vessels were intercepted in international waters on Oct 2 and the participants were detained in Israel's Ketziot Prison before being released on Saturday and flown home via Istanbul.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, who was present to receive them, said the government's diplomatic efforts led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and supported by Turkiye, Egypt and Jordan were key to securing their release.

"Through the cooperation of these friendly nations, Malaysians who were illegally detained have been brought home safely.

"Even when surrounded by the central regime of Israel, they stood firm and carried the spirit of our nation under the Madani government."

Among those who drew attention was social activist and influencer Norfarahin Romli, better known as Farah Lee, who appeared with a white T-shirt wrapped around her head as a makeshift covering after her *tudung* was confiscated during detention.

"This is our symbol of *sumud*, steadfastness," she said.

"We were humiliated in front of non-*mahram* men without our *tudung*, so we used these shirts to preserve our dignity. What we experienced is only a fraction of what the people of Gaza endure every day."

Cinta Gaza Malaysia CEO Muhammad Nadir Al-Nuri Kamaruzaman, who was also part of the mission, said although the flotilla was prevented from breaking the blockade, it achieved its broader symbolic goal.

"Even though we did not succeed in breaking the siege, we succeeded in breaking the silence.

"Our struggle does not end here, Palestine still bleeds, and we must continue to speak for them."

'Govt reviewing new EPF proposal'

KUALA LUMPUR: Finance Deputy Minister Lim Hui Ying said the government is still reviewing and studying a proposal to introduce a new structure for the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) accounts that would be implemented on contributors reaching the minimum retirement age.

She said the new structure would be divided into two components, a flexible savings component in which withdrawals could be made at any time according to the member's needs.

The second component would be retirement income savings, in which the member's savings would be distributed periodically or monthly until fully depleted.

"This (new structure) would only apply to new members who register after the implementation date. Once implemented, existing members who wish to opt into the proposed structure may also be allowed to do so," she said during the question-and-answer session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

She was responding to a supplementary question from Tebrau MP Jimmy Puah, who asked about the steps taken by the government to implement the proposal and re-evaluate the EPF withdrawal methods.

Lim emphasised there are no changes to the existing EPF withdrawal policy, adding that the option to withdraw savings at ages 55 and 60 remains.

"Currently, members have the flexibility to withdraw their savings in a lump sum, partially or through periodic payments."

Lim also said as of Aug 31, 2025, there are 16.5 million EPF members, with savings totalling RM1.31 trillion, a 9.9% increase compared with RM1.20 trillion in 2024. – Bernama



Amir (centre) at the event with Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin (left) and Economy Ministry secretary-general Datuk Nor Azmie Diron. – ***ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/ THESUN***

Hardcore poverty almost eradicated: Economy minister

PUTRAJAYA: Hardcore poverty in Malaysia is now almost history, with the latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2024 showing the rate plunging to 0.09%, representing less than 8,000 households nationwide.

However, absolute poverty still lingers, affecting 416,000 households or 5.1% of the population, down from 6.2% in 2022.

Economy Minister Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan said the figures mark a major milestone in Malaysia's socio-economic journey.

"Malaysia has achieved its main target, with hardcore poverty almost eradicated at 0.09%. This reflects the effectiveness of government initiatives to raise incomes, empower communities and improve people's wellbeing."

Amir was speaking at the HIES launch event at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre yesterday.

He said the government's focus must now move beyond temporary assistance to long-term empowerment.

"The approach to poverty eradication must focus on social mobility, not merely short-term aid."

According to a survey by the Statistics Department, the median monthly household income rose to RM7,017 in 2024, a 5.1% annual increase from 2022, while the average income climbed to RM9,155, up 3.8%.

Average disposable income reached RM7,584, while the median income rose to RM5,999.

Several states, including Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Penang, recorded median household incomes above the national level, with Penang posting the fastest growth between 2022 and 2024.

The HIES also showed a narrowing income gap, with Malaysia's Gini coefficient improving to 0.390 in 2024 from 0.404 two years earlier.

Amir said this improvement reflects a fairer spread of prosperity.

"The Gini coefficient has improved from 0.404 to 0.390, one of the clearest signs that income gaps are closing and more Malaysians are benefiting from growth."

He said under the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP), the government would continue focusing on strengthening social mobility in line with the Madani framework.

Amir also highlighted the role of the Central Database Hub in providing accurate, real-time data to guide targeted interventions for vulnerable groups.

Household spending patterns reflected lifestyle shifts, with average monthly expenditure rising to RM5,566 in 2024, a 3.9% annual increase.

He congratulated the department for its international recognition in statistical transparency, adding that the achievement underscores Malaysia's commitment to inclusive and sustainable growth under the 13MP. – *By* ***Faiz Ruzman***

Veteran journalist reappointed Bernama chairman

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai *(pic)* has been reappointed as Bernama chairman, while Kuala Lumpur High Court Judge Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid has been named President of its Supervisory Council.

Their appointments, effective Sept 1, 2025, to Aug 31, 2027, were made with the consent of His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia.

Penang-born Wong, 64, a National Journalism Laureate, was first appointed Bernama chairman on Sept 1, 2023. With over 40 years in the media industry, he previously served on Bernama's Board of Governors (2004–2010) and Supervisory Council (2010–2014).



In 2003, Wong won the Malaysian Press Institute's Best Journalist Award for his investigative piece on Malaysian terrorists in Afghanistan and was listed by Asia Inc. among Asia's top 50 young movers and shakers.

He later received the World Chinese Economic Forum's Lifetime Achievement Award (2014) and McMillan Woods' Media Leader Award (2015).

Azhar, 61, replaces Datuk Muhammad Jamil Hussin. The Batu Pahat native holds a law degree from International Islamic University Malaysia and began his career as a magistrate in 1989. The Supervisory Council ensures Bernama's compliance with the Bernama Act 1967. – Bernama

Surge in stalled public projects raises alarm over governance

BY **QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI**
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With over 1,500 initiatives cancelled, delayed or not started, economists urge stricter oversight, transparent procurement and stronger delivery system

PETALING JAYA: A surge in stalled and uncompleted government projects has raised serious questions over the effectiveness of project management and accountability across ministries, particularly in the Education Ministry which recorded the highest number of incomplete initiatives.

According to the Auditor-General's (AG) Report 3/2025, the ministry had 112 projects cancelled or deferred, 840 yet to begin, 554 still ongoing and 534 completed, painting a worrying picture of delays and inefficiency.

Economist Prof Geoffrey Williams said such setbacks not only tie up resources and inflate costs but also postpone public access to improved infrastructure, forcing communities to cope with outdated facilities and slowing national progress.

"The high number of stalled projects shows weaknesses in project management and accountability systems. While contractors are ultimately responsible, the bigger question is why they are not being held to account."

Williams said prolonged delays hinder human capital development and weaken Malaysia's competitiveness against regional peers.

"Reforms are needed mainly in project management, monitoring and accountability – these must happen at the earliest delivery points.

"Stricter penalties must also be applied, but ideally, such situations should be prevented through better governance of procurement processes. The best contractors must be hired through open competition, not direct contracts."

Economist Dr Mohamad Idham Md Razak said the high number of stalled and cancelled education projects under the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP) signals execution challenges rather than weak policy direction.

He said stronger coordination and monitoring mechanisms are crucial to ensure resources are used efficiently and deliver intended outcomes.

"From an economist's perspective, such delays indicate governance gaps in managing public funds, especially in project delivery and oversight.

"Yet, they also create an opportunity for the government to reassess priorities, tighten financial controls and ensure that future allocations are linked to performance-based outcomes and improving fiscal discipline."

Mohamad Idham said the delays exposed systemic weaknesses in procurement and project management, including poor contractor performance and bureaucratic hurdles.

"Stalled projects waste allocated funds and reduce value-for-money for taxpayers. But with proper recovery plans and by redirecting funds to high-impact initiatives, the government can improve fiscal efficiency and rebuild public trust."

He warned that incomplete education infrastructure could disrupt access to quality learning environments in the short term and dampen human capital and productivity growth in the long run.

"These setbacks can widen regional disparities, but prompt intervention and completion of key projects could yield significant multiplier effects once operational.

"Project delays directly hinder Malaysia's education and human capital targets under the 12MP by slowing progress toward equitable access and skill development.

"However, identifying and addressing these gaps now can strengthen the next phase of the plan, ensuring more inclusive and resilient growth in education outcomes."

Mohamad Idham said enforcing stricter accountability measures, conducting independent audits and ensuring greater transparency in procurement would go a long way in improving project outcomes.

"Such reforms would deter mismanagement, enhance trust in government institutions and ensure that every ringgit spent delivers tangible results for students, educators and the broader economy."

'Bullying inflicts deep trauma and derails futures'

PETALING JAYA: Bullying in schools remains a serious threat to students' emotional and psychological wellbeing, with far-reaching effects that extend beyond the classroom, said Alliance for a Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye.

He said bullying can inflict lasting trauma, trigger mental health issues and lead to declining academic performance.

"Bullying not only destroys the future of individuals but also fosters a culture of violence that contradicts the principles of humanity and learning."

Lee urged for comprehensive and preventive measures, stressing that the culture of silence and denial must end.

He said schools must report bullying cases transparently to parents, authorities and the police, with firm disciplinary action against perpetrators.

He also proposed that schools strengthen support systems by hiring more trained counsellors and set up confidential reporting channels so students can seek help without fear of reprisal.

"To tackle bullying effectively, awareness must start early. It's not just about punishment – it's about changing mindsets and helping both victims and perpetrators heal and learn."

Lee further recommended that schools enhance supervision and safety by installing CCTV cameras in strategic areas such as cafeterias, corridors and classrooms, and by increasing teacher presence during recess and extracurricular activities. – By ***KIRTINEE RAMESH***

Include occupational safety in school audits: Lam Thye

BY **KIRTINEE RAMESH**
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PETALING JAYA: The Education Ministry must include Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) elements in its ongoing nationwide school safety audits to prevent future tragedies stemming from neglected infrastructure, said Alliance for a Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye.

He said while the ministry's audit of more than 700 schools is a commendable effort, it must be comprehensive – extending beyond discipline, bullying or crime prevention – to cover the physical safety of school environments.

"School safety must be looked at in a holistic manner. It should not just focus on student behaviour or criminal elements but also cover the physical safety and infrastructure within schools."

Lee was responding to a recent incident in Negeri Sembilan, where a nine-year-old boy died after falling into an uncovered sewage pit during a school sports event on Sept 27.

"This is a heartbreaking example of how neglect in basic infrastructure safety can cost a young life. Such incidents should never happen within school grounds," he said.

Lee stressed that OSH principles, which are standard in workplaces, should also apply in schools since teachers and staff work there daily while students share the same environment.

"Schools are also workplaces. Teachers work there and students spend most of their day there. So, occupational safety and health apply just as much."

He urged the ministry to ensure at least one trained occupational safety and health coordinator (OSH-C) is appointed in every school to monitor and mitigate safety risks.

Under the Human Resources Ministry's framework, OSH-Cs are responsible for identifying hazards, reporting risks and implementing preventive measures to reduce accidents.

"If a teacher or staff member receives OSH-C training, they'll know what to do during emergencies – from reporting procedures to taking immediate safety measures before help arrives," Lee explained.

He said the Education Ministry must also prioritise safe infrastructure, including secure drains, well-maintained toilets, sports fields and canteens, to minimise accidents and fatalities.

"Prevention starts with awareness and responsibility. Every school must take OSH seriously," he added.

Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek recently said the school safety audits are being conducted nationwide, with full reports expected within the next one to two months.

The audits form part of the government's Safe School Framework, which also covers bullying, mental health and student welfare, and is expected to be included in Budget 2026 proposals.



Lee said occupational safety and health should also apply at schools as they are standard workplaces in which teachers, staff and students share the same environment daily. – ***MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN***



BUDGET 2026 WISH LIST

'Education must be prioritised in line with 13MP goals'

Robust system vital to ensure policies translate into progress in classrooms: Expert

BY **HARITH KAMAL**
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PETALING JAYA: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia education expert Dr Anuar Ahmad said Budget 2026 must put education at the core of national development if Malaysia hopes to achieve the goals of the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP).

He said the upcoming budget is "no ordinary one", adding that it would be the first tabled under the 13MP, setting the direction for the nation's education and social mobility agenda until 2030.

"Chapter 3 of the 13MP focuses on improving social mobility through education.

"There are eight strategies outlined and all of them require strong funding and serious implementation."

He also said a robust education delivery system is vital to ensure that policies designed in Putrajaya translate into progress in classrooms.

"If a new curriculum is designed at the federal level, it must be properly implemented in schools. Governance must be clear, practical and efficient for quality to improve."

He urged better coordination among ministries involved in education, from the Education and Higher Education ministries to those overseeing preschool programmes, to prevent duplication and strengthen efficiency.

Anuar said several educational institutions should review and streamline their functions, as some had overlapping or unclear responsibilities.

He cited the National Student Consultative Council as an example, saying its role should be enhanced to support national education goals.

He called on the government to allocate sufficient funds for compulsory early childhood education for five-year-olds under the 13MP framework.

"This means building more preschools, training qualified teachers and possibly helping private preschool operators so that children from low-income families are not left behind."

He added that improving English proficiency must also be a priority.

"This could be achieved through hiring more English teachers, providing better learning materials, establishing language labs and implementing programmes involving native English-speaking educators.

"All these efforts require sufficient funding to make a real impact."

He said the 13MP introduces a new national curriculum that emphasises national identity, socio-emotional learning, literacy, numeracy, digital skills, artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship, financial literacy and sustainability.

"To support this shift, Budget 2026 must provide adequate allocations for teacher training, counselling services and new learning programmes in these areas."

He also proposed reviewing school hours and the operations of specialised institutions, including boarding schools, MRSMs and sports schools, to ensure they remain relevant in developing future talent.

Anuar added that Budget 2026 should not stand apart from the 13MP, but serve as its driving force.

"The budget must be a tool to achieve the objectives of the 13MP, not merely to cover yearly administrative expenses."

He expressed hope that the government would link education allocations in the budget to the plan's long-term objectives.

"We hope Budget 2026 would provide a clear direction on whether it supports the 13MP's goals or simply focuses on short-term needs."

In Budget 2025, the Education Ministry received RM64.1 billion, the largest allocation in the history of the nation.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will table Budget 2026 in Parliament tomorrow.



Jose said Budget 2026 must be for working people, particularly gig workers, e-hailing and p-hailing drivers, who have become the backbone of Malaysia's economy. – ***MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN***

Gig workers need further support, says group

BY **QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI**
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PETALING JAYA: The Gig Workers Bill 2025 may recognise e-hailing and delivery drivers for the first time, but the real test lies in whether Budget 2026 delivers concrete protection, fair pay and lower costs for the people keeping Malaysia moving.

Malaysia E-Hailing and Delivery Organisation president Jose Rizal said while the Bill is a long-overdue milestone, gig workers continue to struggle with unstable income, high platform commissions and rising fuel prices.

"Laws alone do not protect livelihoods, implementation does. We need strong enforcement, digital monitoring and funding to ensure drivers actually benefit," he told *theSun*.

He said beyond Social Security Organisation (Socso) coverage, the government should introduce stronger social safety nets under Budget 2026 to protect drivers from income shocks and insecurity.

Among the proposals are matched Employees Provident Fund (EPF) contributions to build retirement savings, an Emergency Income Fund for temporary loss of earnings, micro-insurance for illness or vehicle downtime and affordable healthcare access for active drivers.

"Protection must reflect reality. Many gig workers live day-to-day, so safety nets should meet them wherever they are."

He added that tax incentives and reliefs should also be introduced to ease compliance and operational costs as many drivers struggle with high expenses and tax filing.

Proposals include flat-rate expense deductions for fuel, maintenance and service, tax breaks for drivers contributing to Socso or EPF and incentives for those shifting to electric vehicles (EVs).

"These small changes could make a big difference for daily earners, reducing their burden while encouraging long-term savings and greener mobility."

He also said Budget 2026 should drive sustainable sector growth without raising costs for consumers, through fairer platform practices and targeted incentives.

This includes tax rebates and infrastructure support for EV adoption, travel passes such as My50 for low-income users and greater transparency on platform commissions.

"When drivers are protected and consumers supported, the whole ecosystem grows sustainably without anyone paying the price unfairly."

Jose added that gig worker training must be treated as an investment, not charity, and urged the government to fund upskilling and Technical and Vocational Education and Training programmes such as EmpowerGIG.

He said drivers need skills in digital literacy, financial management and micro-entrepreneurship to turn gig work into a viable career path.

"Gig work should become a career pathway, not a dead end."

He said Budget 2026 must ultimately be a budget for working people, particularly gig, e-hailing and p-hailing drivers, and the freelance workforce, who have become the backbone of Malaysia's economy.

"The nation's economic policy must shift from short-term relief to long-term empowerment that builds people's capacity and dignity."

Call to address issues faced by parents, teachers and students

BY **FAIZ RUZMAN**
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PETALING JAYA: As Budget 2026 draws near, parents, teachers and students are calling for allocations that address rising education costs, digital readiness and long-standing gaps in rural access.

Graphic designer Ted Adriama Nasil, 37, a single father of three children, said financial aid must be expanded to reflect today's realities.

"I hope the government could increase assistance such as the Bantuan Awal Persekolahan, book vouchers and education tax relief to reduce the burden of school expenses and university fees."

Ted added that digital support is now just as vital as traditional aid.

"The government should provide subsidies for student gadgets, affordable or free high-speed internet and digital training programmes for both students and teachers.

"Some subjects are outdated, and digital skills are more relevant now."

Meanwhile, teachers say rural education challenges require more than classroom supplies.

A 25-year-old English teacher from Sarawak, who requested anonymity, said many of her students come from B40 families in villages around Sarikei.

"I have served here for six months. Most of our students are *Iban* or less fortunate Chinese children from nearby villages, primarily from B40 families.

"From my perspective as someone who teaches and lives in a rural area, the government should prioritise transportation and accommodation support. Many rural students live far from school, so travel costs could be a heavy burden."

She urged the government to expand hostel facilities, transport subsidies and financial aid for low-income families to ensure equal access to education.

She also said while digital devices and internet access have improved, training remains inadequate.

"The government should focus on training for teachers and students to make digital learning more effective.

"Without proper guidance, many still struggle to use these tools (to their full potential). By investing in digital skills workshops and continuous professional development, technology could actually improve learning outcomes."

University students voiced similar concerns, highlighting cost of living pressures and weak infrastructure.

A 22-year-old science student from Perlis said campus conditions were unstable, citing water supply disruptions earlier this year.

"In April, our campus had to activate a crisis task force and bring in water tankers because of supply disruptions.

"Hostel spaces are limited, so many students stay outside and pay higher rent. When water cuts happen, we have to buy bottled water or pay extra for laundry. The (financial) strain grows heavier."

He urged the government to prioritise campus infrastructure and targeted financial aid.

"We need more resilient campuses that could handle disruptions and financial assistance that reflects the real cost of living, not just tuition fees.

"No student should have to protest just to get running water."

With the budget announcement just a day away, parents, teachers and students agree that Malaysia's education challenges extend beyond classrooms.

Their hope is that Budget 2026 delivers not only policy commitments but also tangible measures that ease financial pressures, strengthen digital learning and ensure every child is able study in a stable, supportive environment.

Bersatu leader alleges double standards among members

Criticism directed at 'golden boy' treated as attack on party itself: Wan Saiful

BY **IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE**
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PETALING JAYA: Bersatu Supreme Council member Datuk Wan Saiful Wan Jan has renewed his criticism of party secretary-general Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, alleging that a clear double standard exists within the party, in which Azmin appears shielded from scrutiny.

He called Azmin the party's "golden boy", adding that any criticism directed at him is treated as an attack on Bersatu itself.

"It becomes difficult when criticising one individual is seen as criticising the entire party.

"Others can criticise us, but when we question the actions of this 'golden boy', it is unacceptable," he told reporters after appearing before the Bersatu Disciplinary Board yesterday to respond to charges against him.

Six Bersatu division leaders were also summoned to the hearing, including Ipoh Timor division chief Muhammad Fadhli Ismail and Ampang division chief Mohd Isa Saidi.

Wan Saiful, who is also Tasek Gelugor MP, is being investigated over his alleged involvement in the signing of statutory declarations (SDs) purportedly linked to efforts to unseat party president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

He said the leaders are facing different accusations from different complainants, but the cases appear to be connected.

"I cannot share details of what transpired. This is an internal matter. Unlike others, we do not believe in airing party issues in public or on social media. We want to protect the party because we love the party," he said.

Wan Saiful also raised concerns about possible conflicts of interest within the Disciplinary Board, claiming that some members had requested changes to its composition.

He dismissed allegations that he is collaborating with external parties, saying he had previously exposed attempts to persuade him to defect.

"Last year, I shared my experience of being invited to cross over. I had recordings, photos, audio, phone numbers, all submitted to the Parliamentary Rights and Privileges Committee. They found that I had not misled anyone.

"If I had wanted to accept an offer to leave the party, I could have done it last year," he said.

Without naming anyone, he hinted that certain party figures had met with individuals from "the other side" and received substantial sums of money.

"We know who is really close to the other side. We know who has received millions. But we are still disciplined. Do not push too hard as there might be a reaction," he cautioned.

Bersatu's internal rifts came to light during its annual general meeting last month, when Muhyiddin revealed that there had been attempts to gather SDs to challenge his leadership.

Wan Saiful, who also leads Bersatu's Baling division, later denied trying to pressure Muhyiddin to resign and accused Azmin of warning division leaders allegedly involved in the initiative.



Wan Saiful (centre) speaking to reporters, alongside other division leaders, after appearing before the Disciplinary Board. – ***ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN***

Impartiality of party Disciplinary Board questioned

PETALING JAYA: Bersatu Supreme Council member Wan Ahmad Fayhsal Wan Ahmad Kamal has urged the party to revamp its Disciplinary Board, claiming that conflicts of interest among members could compromise the integrity of ongoing proceedings.

He questioned the impartiality of the panel chaired by Datuk Mohammed Radzi Abdul Manan, who is father-in-law of Bersatu deputy president Datuk Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu and father of Supreme Council member Datuk Nolee Ashilin.

"I have stated my answers and position clearly. I am prepared to face a fair and just disciplinary process regarding the charges brought against me.

"However, I believe some members of the Disciplinary Board may have personal interests or connections that conflict with the party's broader interests," the Machang MP said.

He stressed that his request is not an attempt to dodge accountability, but to ensure the process remains transparent and credible to members and the public.

"There is a risk that the proceedings and their reporting may be influenced by individuals with personal ties to those involved.

"That is why I have asked for certain board members to be replaced. I am not running away from the process. I am simply asking for the hearing to be postponed until a new composition is formed."

Wan Ahmad Fayhsal claimed that other affected individuals supported his call for changes, saying it would preserve grassroots confidence in the party's disciplinary mechanism.

He also clarified that his case differs from that of fellow Supreme Council member Datuk Wan Saiful Wan Jan, noting that it is unrelated to the statutory declarations linked to party president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"There are two issues raised in my case, both being internal matters. One involves party elections and the other concerns matters affecting the image and dignity of the party. I have never taken these issues outside the party." – BY **IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE**

Police probe vehicle with Hebrew sticker

MALACCA: State police have launched an investigation into a four-wheel drive vehicle allegedly displaying a sticker with Hebrew text interpreted as "Malaysia is our home" or "Malaysia is in our hands".

Malacca police chief Datuk Dzulkhairi Mukhtar confirmed that the probe followed a police report lodged on Tuesday by the chief minister's special religious affairs officer after a 14-second video of the vehicle was widely spread on social media.

Authorities said the video has stirred anxiety among the public due to its sensitive connotations.

"Preliminary checks revealed that the vehicle is registered to a man residing in Gemencheh, Negeri Sembilan. The case is being investigated under Section 504(b) of the Penal Code for inciting fear or public unrest, and Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 for improper use of network facilities."

Dzulkhairi said police would conduct a transparent investigation to uphold public safety and harmony.

He urged the public not to speculate or spread unverified information regarding the video. – Bernama

Man killed after car crushed by tree

KUALA PILAH: The Negeri Sembilan Islamic Religious Council's Jempol branch assistant officer was killed after the car he was driving was crushed by a falling tree near here on Tuesday.

Kuala Pilah police chief Supt Muhammad Mustafah Hussin said the incident is believed to have occurred at 11.20pm along Jalan Sawah Lebar–Sungkak when the 38-year-old was travelling from Jempol towards Seremban.

"The weather was reported to be clear at the time of the incident. The driver sustained severe injuries to several parts of his body. He was pronounced dead at the scene."

The victim was later identified as Muhammad Nawawi Husin, according to a condolence post on the council's Facebook page.

Muhammad Mustafah said the case is being investigated under Section 41(1) of the Road Transport Act 1987 and further investigations are ongoing. – Bernama

RM56m drugs seized and destroyed in Johor, Perak

PETALING JAYA: Police in Johor and Perak have seized and destroyed more than RM56 million worth of drugs in separate operations this week.

Johor police yesterday disposed of various drugs and processing equipment valued at RM43.54 million at the state police headquarters.

State police chief CP Datuk Kamarul Zaman Mamat said the disposal involved compact and liquid drugs weighing 652kg and 12,243.02 litres, linked to 4,528 investigation papers from 2000 to 2024.

Among the drugs destroyed were 57.81kg of heroin, 17.1kg of *ganja*, 94.39kg of ketamine, 49.65kg of methamphetamine, 105.64kg of MDMA, 1.59kg of nimetazepam, 325.38kg of *ketum* leaves, 193.14g of *yaba* pills and 456.1g of vape liquid.

The disposal was carried out by a scheduled waste management company at Telok Panglima Garang in Selangor using an advanced "scheduled waste-to-energy" incineration method that is coordinated, pollution-free and produces renewable energy.

In Perak, police seized RM12.9 million worth of drugs after a high-speed chase along the southbound North-South Expressway near Slim River on Monday.

State police chief Datuk Noor Hisam Nordin said a Highway Patrol Unit from Bukit Aman's Traffic Investigation and Enforcement Department had stopped a suspicious car at Km375 at 1.30pm.

"The individuals in the car attempted to flee, prompting police to give chase for about two kilometres. The vehicle eventually stopped and two men fled into nearby jungle areas. Efforts are underway to track them down."

An inspection of the vehicle uncovered 15 sacks containing drugs believed to be methamphetamine, weighing about 374kg, and a black plastic bag containing 11.281kg of heroin, making this the largest drug haul in the state this year.

Noor Hisam said the case is being investigated under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952.

Checks also revealed that the vehicle is registered under a woman's name. – Bernama

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SCAN ME

Resort doubles as hub for conservation and restoration

Founders provide staff housing and flexible funding for environmental NGO

BY **KIRTINEE RAMESH**
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

MERSING: Batu Batu Resort founder Cher Chua-Lassalvy never set out to build a conservation movement when she first set foot on Pulau Tengah island more than a decade ago, as her goal was modest, namely to do no harm.

"At the start, it was simple. Let us just not spoil what is here."

That quiet commitment shaped every decision, such as no boat anchors dropped on coral heads and no bright lights disturbing nesting turtles, and one act of care led to another.

"We hired a marine biologist to educate guests.

"Soon she told us, 'I do not just want to give talks. I want to save the sea.' So, we hired another. Then two became three, and three became four," she said.

What began as an eco-minded resort slowly evolved into a hub for research and restoration.

Today, Tengah Island Conservation (TIC), which spun off as an independent NGO in 2019, holds over a decade's worth of biodiversity data from seven surrounding islands.

"Those records did not exist before. Now, policymakers can plan coastal development with real science," she said.

Cher and her husband still run Batu Batu, which continues to provide staff housing and flexible funding for TIC.

"That kind of support is rare and vital. Grants could buy a boat or fund a project manager, but not the everyday costs that keep an organisation alive," she said.

People at the heart of conservation

Over time, Cher realised that protecting nature meant working with those who live closest to it.

"We could not make a lasting difference without involving the communities around us."

Early efforts focused on schools, which she admitted is "the easier audience", but the urgency of climate change soon demanded broader engagement.

"These islanders understand climate change in ways we do not. They notice shifts in the sea and weather long before outsiders do."

Today, TIC supports alternative livelihoods. Locals rent boats to researchers, cater meals, host festivals and open their homes as dance spaces for children.

"It builds an economy within conservation. It gives kids a reason to dream of higher education without leaving their heritage behind."

To her, conservation is not charity but common sense.

"When you save nature, you cannot show a profit line. But look at coastal erosion. Governments spend millions on seawalls while healthy coral reefs do that job for free."

She expressed hope that Malaysia would become a regional leader in regenerative tourism.

"Compared with Thailand or Indonesia, we are relatively undeveloped. It is not too late to plan wisely, protect small towns, celebrate authentic culture and avoid the mistakes of mass tourism."

However, the sea remains unpredictable.

"Rising tides could erase everything," she warned.

"Many locals might not say 'carbon emissions' but they feel stronger storms and shifting currents. Awareness is growing, but turning that into daily action takes time."

But Cher remains hopeful.

"If everyone picks up plastic, if every boat slows down for dugongs, billions of small acts could add up."



Cher said it is not too late to plan wisely, protect small towns, celebrate authentic culture and avoid the mistakes of mass tourism. – ***KIRTINEE RAMESH/THESUN***

After a decade of work, Tengah's reefs are showing signs of renewal.

"We are seeing more juvenile turtles now," she said.

"Maybe it is the start of something bigger, a model in which nature, community and enterprise truly thrive together."

Weaving heritage back to life

Across the water on Pulau Besar, 64-year-old Saudah Rastam, fondly known as Mak Oda, keeps another legacy alive.

A master *ketupat* weaver since the age of 10, she is skilled in intricate styles such as *kepala kambing* (goat's head) and *manggis* (mangosteen) patterns. But few young people are learning the craft.

"In those days, we did not have gadgets or games. We filled our time weaving *ketupat*."

Mak Oda recalled the friendly weaving contests once held among island women, gatherings that celebrated creativity and community.

"Back then, we would compete in weaving contests. It was fun and brought us together. Now, the younger generation is too busy," she said.

Pulau Besar village head Kelana Ali Kahar, respectfully known as Tok Kelana, 50, is determined to change that through cultural and sustainability programmes.

"This is about continuity, keeping our traditions alive.

"We plan to revive *gazal* and *joget lambak* performances, which are traditional music and dance, among our people."

He recalled the lively nights of his youth when villagers performed *bangsawan* plays under the stars.

"When I was young, there were no televisions here.

"We entertained ourselves with stories of heroes, such as Hang Jebat, ghost tales, even 'Romeo and Juliet'! Everyone gathered on the field. It was our theatre."

He added that a recent month-long festival rekindled that old spirit.

"It brought our heritage to life through performances, sustainability efforts and knowledge-sharing.

"It highlighted not just our art and *zapin* dance, but also our commitment to eco-tourism, biodiversity and cultural heritage as the roots of sustainable development."

Tok Kelana said Pulau Besar and its neighbouring islands hold immense potential.

"I am confident that our islands could grow into an international eco-tourism hub where culture and the environment thrive together."

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Thai PM declares war on drugs

BANGKOK: Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul has declared the suppression of narcotics a national priority, vowing to "win the war on drugs" and eradicate the menace.

Anutin, who is also interior minister, said drug suppression has always been a priority for the administration and the government remains committed to continuing its crackdown.

He said that the government considers drug traffickers and dealers as enemies of the state, while also working to amend relevant laws to enhance the effectiveness of enforcement.

"The government is taking the issue seriously and will act as a relentless enemy of drug dealers, users and traffickers, applying equally severe punishment under the law. Anyone involved in narcotics will face strict legal consequences," Anutin told a press conference at the Police Narcotics Suppression Bureau here yesterday.

Anutin warned that any community or village that neglects the issue and becomes a hub for drug trading or storage will face stricter legal measures and heavier penalties.

"The government will continue to pursue drug suppression relentlessly and without leniency to safeguard the safety of communities and maintain national order," he said.

Anutin said police carried out raids earlier this week, dismantling four major drug syndicates, arresting 10 suspects and seizing 15.78 million methamphetamine pills, 235kg of crystal methamphetamine and assets. – Bernama

Dozens killed at Myanmar protest

YANGON: An attack on a festival event and protest killed 40 people, including children, an attendee and a local committee member said yesterday.

Hundreds of people were gathered in central Myanmar's Chaung U township for the Thadingyut full moon festival on Monday evening when a paraglider dropped bombs on the crowd, according to a member of the committee that organised the event.

The woman, who requested anonymity for security reasons, said people were gathering for the festival and a demonstration at dusk when the bombs killed more than 40 people and wounded about 80 others.

"The committee alerted people and one-third of the crowd managed to flee," she said. "But immediately, one motor-powered paraglider flew right over the crowd", dropping two bombs.

When another motorised paraglider left the area, she said people rushed to help the wounded.

A resident of Chaung U who attended the event on Monday confirmed the estimated toll. A media outlet also said 40 people were killed in the attack. – AFP

India flags testing lapses at pharmaceutical firms

Toxic cough syrup linked to 17 deaths

NEW DELHI: Some Indian pharmaceutical firms failed to follow rules that every batch of medicinal ingredients is tested, the country's drug regulator said yesterday, after deaths in the past month of 17 children linked to toxic cough syrups.

An advisory by the drugs controller general of India, Rajeev Raghuvanshi, said the regulator carried out checks at some factories and found serious lapses.

In the advisory dated Oct 7, Raghuvanshi did not name any companies or the number of companies that were found to have flouted norms, but said the inspections had been carried out at firms whose drugs had earlier been found to be "not of standard quality".

By law, Indian drugmakers have to test each batch of raw material and the final product, apart from keeping records.

Exports of cough syrups require another layer of tests at government-mandated labs since 2023 following the deaths of at least 141 children in Gambia, Uzbekistan and Cameroon linked to Indian syrups.

Despite the stricter rules and inspections since the overseas deaths, at least 17 children under the age of five have died in India in the past month after consuming cough medicine that contained toxic diethylene glycol in quantities nearly 500 times the permissible limit, officials say.

The medicine, Coldrif Syrup made by Sresan Pharmaceutical Manufacturer, was only sold locally.

Reuters could not contact Sresan chief G. Ranganathan, whose office and factory in Tamil Nadu were shut and his phone switched off.

Police are investigating the company for manslaughter, sales of the syrup have been banned, and central authorities have recommended cancelling Sresan's manufacturing licence.

The Health Ministry said on Sunday authorities were carrying out inspections across 19 other manufacturing units in six states. It did not identify the companies.

"The manufacturers are not carrying out testing of each batch of the excipients/inactive and active pharmaceutical ingredients for verification of compliance with the prescribed standards before using them in the manufacture of formulations and also in the finished products," Raghuvanshi said.

Two of the inspected companies were Shape Pharma and Rednex Pharmaceuticals, based in the key pharmaceutical manufacturing hub of Gujarat.

State authorities said on Tuesday that samples of cough syrups produced by the companies had been found to be "not of standard quality".

In checks between Oct 3 and 5, state and federal inspectors identified unspecified deficiencies at the companies and ordered an immediate halt to all production and distribution. No one responded to calls made to Shape and Rednex offices.

Reuters could not ascertain if the two companies had also exported medicines. State officials did not respond to requests for comment.

"As a precautionary measure, three additional cough syrup samples were taken from Shape Pharma and 11 from Rednex Pharmaceuticals have been sent to government laboratories for further testing," Gujarat Health Minister Rishikesh Patel said. "Action will be taken based on those reports."

India's pharmaceutical industry, which is exceeded in size only by the US and China, is valued at US$50 billion (RM211 billion). – Reuters



LOVE OFFERING ... Buddhist devotees make offerings during a parade celebrating the end of the Buddhist Lent in Thailand's Narathiwat province. – ***AFPPIC***

Indonesia restricts access to Cikande red zone

SERANG: The Indonesian government has restricted access for residents in the red zone affected by Cesium-137 radiation exposure in the Cikande industrial area, Serang District, to ensure public safety during the decontamination process, reported Antara news agency.

Environment Minister Hanif Faisol Nurofiq on Tuesday said this was part of zoning measures put in place by a joint team from the National Research and Innovation Agency and the Nuclear Energy Regulatory Agency.

"We will handle the red zone first, followed by the yellow zone," he said.

Nurofiq said restrictions on movement are necessary to prevent direct exposure.

"We will limit people's movement in this area," he said.

The response will focus on homes closest to the source of exposure.

"We only localise those nearby. Not all of them, just a few houses that need to be evacuated," he said.

The joint team in the field has marked the dangerous areas with barriers and prohibition lines.

The minister explained that the safe radiation threshold is set at below 1 microsievert per hour.

"The transmission distance will be safe when the figure reaches 1 microsievert. So, it should not exceed 1 microsievert per hour," he said.

Nurofiq said this is to ensure public safety until the decontamination is complete.

Cesium-137 exposure was reportedly found in PT BMS's frozen shrimp products exported to the US, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

Coordinating Minister for Food Zulkifli Hasan said last month that the Cesium-137 contamination in shrimp products occurred only in the Cikande Modern Industrial Estate and did not spread to the national supply chain or exports. – Bernama



Sydney police foil gang hit

Three men detained

SYDNEY: Police here foiled an organised crime hit near a daycare facility.

New South Wales police swooped in on two cars after learning three men were preparing to commit a crime in Revesby, a suburb in the city's southwest, on Tuesday.

Police stopped two cars and arrested the men, finding two firearms, balaclavas, bodyworn cameras and jerrycans containing fuel during a search.

A third firearm was found during subsequent searches of vehicles and premises allegedly linked to the men.

Footage from Tuesday showed the two cars wedged between police vehicles as authorities moved in on the men brandishing firearms.

The cars' windscreens were pocked with bullet holes.

One witness, who did not wish to be named, told Australia's Channel Nine he heard the gunshots and went to investigate.

"I started walking out of my house and I heard some more gunshots and then cars were swerving," he said.

Police Assistant Commissioner Scott Cook said authorities had been investigating a transnational crime network "believed to be involved in conspiracies to murder" for several weeks.

Police allege the victim was targeted due to infighting within the syndicate, he said. The detained men reportedly did not know the victim.

They came "pretty close" to carrying out the hit, Cook said.

He expressed shock that the group was "prepared to kill" in an area where there was such a high risk of collateral damage.

"These individuals were being watched and we moved at the right moment," Cook said.

He said there was no chance the trio would have been "allowed to make it to a centre".

The men have been charged with a string of offences, including conspiracy to commit murder and taking part in a criminal group.

The trio were refused bail and will appear in court. Investigations are ongoing.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper reported a Vietnamese criminal syndicate hired the three men and paid for a hit on the victim who was previously linked to the network.

Sydney police have in recent months stepped up efforts to curb criminal activity linked to Vietnamese gangs after a string of violence.

In April, a Sydney woman was abducted and executed over her husband's alleged connections to a Vietnamese-linked organised crime network. Her children were also wounded.

In another case, a man was shot in the head and buried alive.

He survived, dug himself from the dirt and stumbled into a service station to ask for help. – AFP



Police making an arrest near a Sydney daycare facility on Tuesday. – ***NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE HANDOUT /AFPPIC***

UK man pleads guilty to US$99m wine fraud

NEW YORK: A British man pleaded guilty on Tuesday in New York to involvement in a nearly US$100 million (RM422 million) fraud whose victims invested in loans meant for fictitious wealthy wine collectors whose wine also did not exist.

James Wellesley, 59, pleaded guilty to wire fraud conspiracy before District Judge Pamela Chen in Brooklyn, court records show.

Wellesley, also known as Andrew Fuller, had pleaded not guilty to three charges including conspiracy in July.

He is being held at Brooklyn's Metropolitan Detention Centre, after unsuccessfully fighting extradition from Britain.

A lawyer for Wellesley did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

According to his plea agreement, Wellesley could face 10 to 12-1/2 years in prison under recommended federal guidelines.

He also agreed to forfeit US$1 million plus funds in more than two dozen bank accounts.

Co-defendant Stephen Burton, 61, pleaded guilty in July to wire fraud conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy, and accepted a US$26 million forfeiture order.

Prosecutors said Wellesley and Burton, posing as executives at London- and Hong Kong-registered Bordeaux Cellars, raised US$99.4 million by promising loan investors they would receive regular interest payments from "high net worth" wine collectors.

The defendants allegedly claimed the loans were backed by an inventory of more than 25,000 bottles of wine, including from Domaine de la Romanee-Conti in Burgundy and Chateau Lafleur in Bordeaux.

Prosecutors said Bordeaux Cellars controlled far fewer bottles, and as few as 217, while the defendants used loan proceeds for personal expenses and to pay interest to some investors.

The scheme ran from June 2017 to February 2019, and collapsed when interest payments stopped, prosecutors said.

Burton's sentencing is scheduled for Jan 6 and Wellesley's sentencing is on Feb 3, court records show. – Reuters

Australia raises Optus issue with S'pore PM

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he had raised the recent deadly outage of Singtel-owned Optus's emergency call number with his Singaporean counterpart, Lawrence Wong, in a bilateral meeting in Canberra yesterday.

Two back-to-back outages of the emergency "000" number last month have intensified scrutiny of Optus, Australia's second largest telecom operator.

The outages occurred less than a fortnight apart and affected thousands, with the first glitch linked to four deaths because customers were unable to get timely aid.

"I raised the issue and we had a discussion. I thank Prime Minister Wong for the condolences he offered to the families and his support for strong follow-up action," Albanese said at a joint press conference.

Wong said he expected Optus and Singapore Telecommunications, majority owned by state-run Temasek Holdings, to act responsibly, comply fully with Australian laws and cooperate with the inquiry.

"I understand fully the anger, frustration and outrage at what has happened because if this were to have happened in Singapore, I would feel the same. So from that point of view, we understand the sentiments," Wong said.

Singtel boss Yuen Kuan Moon met Australian authorities last week, amid calls from some analysts and lawmakers for Optus CEO Stephen Rue to resign and Optus to be stripped of its operating licence.

Albanese and Wong also entered into an agreement that they said would deepen the defence ties between the two countries.

"We will enhance reciprocal access to defence facilities in Australia and Singapore," a joint statement released after the meeting said.

"This will include expanded access for the Australian Defence Force in Singapore in support of its regional presence and increased access for the Singapore Armed Forces to training areas in Australia." – Reuters

Four dead in Madrid building collapse

MADRID: Spanish emergency services have recovered the bodies of four people from beneath the rubble of a six-storey building that collapsed in central Madrid while being refurbished into a hotel.

"It is with deep sadness that we confirm that Madrid firefighters have recovered the bodies of the people who went missing after the collapse," Mayor Jose Luis Almeida said.

The victims have been identified as three men aged between 30 and 50 from Ecuador, Mali and Guinea-Conakry and employed at the site as construction workers, as well as a 30-year-old woman, the renovation project's architect.

Their remains were found early yesterday, nearly 15 hours after the collapse of the building's interior structure that left its facade intact. Three other workers were injured.

One construction worker named Mikhail was pumping concrete into the building's lower floors and was outside when the collapse occurred. He said he saw a large cloud of dust and immediately ran away.

"I was the first to run, I didn't care about anything else," he told reporters on Tuesday.

According to Madrid's online registry of buildings under construction the property was built in 1965. It underwent two technical inspections in 2012 and 2022 and was classified as "unfavourable" due to "the general condition of the facade, exterior, partition walls, roof, roof terraces and plumbing and sewage system".

The former office building was being converted into a four-star hotel by developer Rehbilita, according to information on its website. Rehbilita did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Hamas upbeat on talks

Gazans want an end to the war



A girl pushes a broken wheelchair loaded with jerrycans at a camp in northern Nuseirat on Tuesday. – ***AFPPIC***

CAIRO: Hamas said yesterday that "optimism" was prevailing in indirect talks with Israel aimed at ending the Gaza war, with the group submitting a list of prisoners it wants released in exchange for freeing Israeli hostages.

The talks aim to thrash out a plan to implement a 20-point peace proposal put forward by US President Donald Trump, and which both Israel and Hamas have responded positively to.

The plan calls for a ceasefire, the release of all the hostages, Hamas's disarmament and a gradual Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Turkiye's intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalin, Trump's special Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner were all due in Sharm El-Sheikh.

"The mediators are making great efforts to remove any obstacles to the implementation of the ceasefire, and a spirit of optimism prevails among all parties," senior Hamas official Taher al-Nunu said from Sharm El-Sheikh.

The group submitted a list of prisoners it wants to be released in the first phase of the truce "in accordance with the agreed-upon criteria and numbers", Nunu said.

In exchange, Hamas is set to release 47 hostages, both alive and dead, who were seized on Oct 7, 2023.

"There's a real chance that we could do something," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Tuesday.

"I think there's a possibility that we could have peace in the Middle East. It's something even beyond the Gaza situation. We want a release of the hostages immediately."

Trump said the United States would do "everything possible to make sure everyone adheres to the deal" if Hamas and Israel did agree on a ceasefire.

Global pressure to end the war has escalated, with much of Gaza flattened, a UN-declared famine unfolding and Israeli hostage families still longing for their loved ones' return.

In Gaza, people were desperate for an end to a war that has upended their lives, interrupted their children's education, and left many families scarred by loss and grief.

"My dream is for the war to end now, not tomorrow," said Abeer Abu Said, a 21-year-old in Gaza who has lost seven family members in the war.

"I don't trust anyone – from the Israeli negotiators or even Hamas – they all lie to us. Negotiations for the sake of negotiations, while we die every minute." – AFP

Ecuador president unharmed in attack

QUITO: Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa escaped unharmed after his motorcade was targeted by stone-hurling protesters and what one minister described as a volley of gunshots on Tuesday.

Noboa was inaugurating a water treatment plant in central Ecuador when his motorcade was set on by a group protesting rising fuel prices.

"About 500 people showed up and were throwing stones and there are bullet marks on the president's car" said Environment Minister Ines Manzano.

She said that five people were arrested and would stand trial on terrorism charges: an offence carrying a maximum punishment of 30 years behind bars.

"This kind of protests, which are not peaceful, are not what we need," Manzano said.

Video released by the government, reportedly filmed from inside the motorcade, shows protesters standing in the road, draped in flags, scrambling to collect large stones and bricks.

As the presidential SUV passed, projectiles thudded into the panelling and shattered windows.

A voice can be heard shouting, "Heads down! Heads down!" as the vehicle sped away.

Officials said they were still investigating whether some of the impact marks on Noboa's armoured Chevrolet Suburban were caused by gunfire.

The attack came amid days of increasingly violent demonstrations sparked by a government decision to raise diesel prices.

Protesters have gone on strike, blocked roads and abducted 16 soldiers, who were eventually released unharmed.

Ecuador's largest indigenous organisation reported on Sunday that a protester had been killed by armed forces at a rally.

Noboa has declared a state of emergency across several provinces.

The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador said that the president's convoy had "entered a resistance zone", leading to "incidents that the government now uses to justify its war policy".

The organisation called to "resolve the crisis with justice and respect".

Noboa's office said on social media following the attack that "cowardly acts will not deter" the president. – AFP



Noboa next to the vehicle he was travelling in when it was attacked. – ***AFPPIC/ECUADORIAN PRESIDENCY HANDOUT***

BRIEFS

GAZA AID FLOTILLA INTERCEPTED

TEL AVIV: A fleet of vessels attempting to deliver aid to Gaza was intercepted by Israeli forces in international waters yesterday. The Freedom Flotilla Coalition's (FFC) vessels and passengers were safe, had been transferred to an Israeli port and were expected to be deported promptly, Israel's Foreign Ministry said. The incident was the second such event in recent days, after Israel had intercepted about 40 vessels and detained more than 450 activists in an aid convoy, the Global Sumud Flotilla, that was also attempting to deliver supplies. The FFC said humanitarians, doctors and journalists have been taken against their will and are being held in unknown conditions. – Reuters

PUTIN-TRUMP MEETING MOMENTUM 'GONE'

MOSCOW: Russia said yesterday that momentum towards reaching a peace deal in Ukraine following Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump's presidential summit in Alaska had largely "gone". The two leaders met at an air base Anchorage in August, but failed to reach any kind of agreement. Diplomatic efforts to end the fighting have since floundered, with both Moscow and Kyiv launching deadly strikes and Russia advancing on the battlefield. "Unfortunately, we must admit that the momentum generated by Anchorage in favour of agreements has largely gone," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said. He blamed Europe for the impasse, accusing them of wanting to wage a "war to the last Ukrainian". – AFP

FRENCH COURT REVIEWS SARKOZY APPEAL

PARIS: France's top court yesterday began examining former president Nicolas Sarkozy's final appeal over illegal campaign financing in 2012, in a case that could cement his second criminal conviction. Sarkozy is seeking to overturn his conviction. If the Court of Cassation upholds Sarkozy's conviction, he will serve a six-month term with an electronic bracelet as per a lighter sentence handed down on appeal last year. The former head of state was initially sentenced to one year in prison in September 2021 on charges that his right-wing party worked with a public relations firm, Bygmalion, to hide the true cost of his 2012 re-election bid. Sarkozy has accused Bygmalion of having enriched itself behind his back and dismissed the allegations against him as "lies". – AFP

'WOMEN HAVE HIGHER RISK OF DEPRESSION'

SYDNEY: Women are genetically at higher risk of clinical depression than men, Australian researchers found in a study. Scientists poured through the DNA of almost 200,000 people with depression to pinpoint shared genetic "flags". Women had almost twice as many of these genetic markers linked to depression than men, according to the project led by Berghofer Medical Research Institute. "The genetic component to depression is larger in females compared with males," said researcher Jodi Thomas. Around 13,000 genetic markers were linked with depression in women compared with 7,000 in men. Clinical depression is one of the most common mental disorders. The study was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Nature Communications*. – AFP



COMMENT by Prof Dr Manjit Singh Sidhu

Leaping into the future of interaction

MULTIMEDIA is no longer just about attractive visuals and catchy sounds in the rapidly changing digital world; it is also about intelligence, immersion and interaction.

We are seeing a change in multimedia features as technology develops further, moving beyond the conventional static images and passive videos into a dynamic ecosystem where augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence and ultra-high definition formats come together to create a more immersive, personalised and engaging experience.

Users in the early days were passive consumers of digital media. At the end of the story, you would view a picture, hear a song or watch a video. However, users are now participants because of advancements like gesture-based interfaces, real-time streaming and interactive video content.

For instance, viewers can select their own narrative path in interactive documentaries. Customers can interact with hosts, ask questions in real time and make purchases right there at livestream shopping events.

The foundation of next-generation multimedia is this change from one-way consumption to active engagement.

AR is one of the most revolutionary developments in multimedia in the future. AR, which is already well-liked in mobile games like Pokémon GO, is making inroads into industries like entertainment, healthcare, retail and education.

When you watch a cooking video, picture yourself pointing your phone at your kitchen counter and watching a 3D chef walk you through the steps. Or imagine a biology student rotating a 3D heart and investigating each valve after scanning an image from a textbook.

The allure of augmented reality lies in its capacity to instantly integrate digital data with the physical world, improving the usability and memorability of learning, shopping and storytelling.

AI is playing a silent yet powerful role in reshaping multimedia. From Netflix recommending your next binge-worthy show to smart photo albums that automatically group pictures by face or location, AI makes content more relevant and accessible.

Next-generation multimedia leverages AI to dynamically adapt content based on user behaviour and preferences. Think of AI-generated music that changes tempo based on your mood or real-time language translation during a video call that keeps the speaker's voice and tone intact.

AI also powers generative content, where algorithms create entire images, videos or music tracks often indistinguishable from those made by humans.

We cannot ignore what we hear as we enhance what we see. 3D audio is the way of the future. By putting sound in three dimensions, technologies like Dolby Atmos, Apple Spatial Audio and Sony 360 Reality Audio provide a new level of immersion. The listener can hear sounds from above, below, behind or anywhere else in addition to the left and right stereo channels.

This is more than just a victory for moviegoers. Spatial audio in video games aids players in more precisely locating in-game action. It can distinguish between various voices in virtual meetings to more accurately simulate a conversation in real life. Additionally, it gives music a concert-like atmosphere, with vocals and instruments floating all around you.

The world is already discussing 8K and even 16K displays, just as we were getting used to 4K. The clarity, detail and depth of these ultra-high definition formats are astounding. Due to their high price and limited content, 8K TVs may not be common in homes just yet but they are already having an impact on fields like digital art, medical imaging and filmmaking.

Resolution isn't the only improvement, though. Wider colour gamuts, faster refresh rates (up to 240Hz and beyond) and HDR (high dynamic range) all help create images that are more in line with what the human eye can see naturally. The outcome? An almost lifelike viewing experience.

Beyond sight and sound, next-generation multimedia is also expanding to touch and possibly even taste and smell. Smartphones and game controllers already use haptic feedback, which uses motion and vibration to mimic physical sensations. However, it is now spreading to VR gloves, wearables and even apparel.

Imagine experiencing the rumble of a spaceship as it takes off while viewing a science fiction film in virtual reality. Or using a smart mat to take a virtual yoga class and receive gentle vibrations that correct your posture. Experiences can become much more meaningful and immersive with this type of multisensory feedback.



AR, which is already well-liked in mobile games like Pokémon GO, is making inroads into industries like entertainment, healthcare, retail and education. — *SUNPIC*

Another trend pushing multimedia into the future is the move to cloud-based platforms. Tools like Adobe Creative Cloud, Canva and Figma allow creators to collaborate in real time, from anywhere in the world.

AI-assisted design tools suggest layout changes, colour palettes or even entire video edits with just a few clicks. This democratisation of multimedia creation means you do not need a high-end PC or a massive budget to produce professional-level content. All you need is a good idea and an internet connection.

As we rush forward into these dazzling multimedia possibilities, there is a growing need to ensure that these features are ethical, inclusive and accessible.

Voice interfaces must understand diverse accents and languages. Visual content should include captions for the hearing-impaired. AR and VR tools should be designed with people with disabilities in mind.

Furthermore, we need to make investments in resources and training that assist users in distinguishing fact from fiction as AI creates deepfakes and synthetic media that are more realistic. Multimedia should be based on inclusivity and trust rather than just innovation in the future.

Multimedia in the next generation is a reinvention rather than merely an improvement. We are about to enter a time when digital content is integrated into our environment, tailored to our taste and created for greater engagement rather than being limited to screens or speakers. We feel, engage and participate in this world rather than merely watching or listening.

Whether you are a creator, a consumer or a curious observer, one thing is clear – the multimedia experiences of tomorrow will be more immersive, intelligent and impactful than ever before.

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When 'help' comes with a price tag

THE word "help" used to mean something simple – a gesture extended from one human to another. It implied kindness, sincerity and goodwill. But today, the meaning has become hazy.

Help has been rebranded, repackaged and in some cases monetised beyond recognition. Recently, a message made its rounds: a seemingly heartfelt invitation to a "special session", promising to help others grow and succeed.

It began warmly, speaking of purpose and shared journeys. Yet, by the end, the offer of help had quietly transformed into a sales pitch. It wasn't the price tag that stood out; it was the misplaced meaning of the word help.

The word "help" was used generously throughout. But what it really meant was: sell. This is not an isolated example; it reflects a wider trend – the commodification of care and the dilution of sincerity.

We live in an age where the language of help is often used as bait, masking profit motives under a polished veneer of empathy. And while there is nothing wrong with being paid for expertise, the problem begins when help becomes a transaction disguised as compassion.

Many of us are taught to give back – to mentor, guide and lift others as we rise. But the moment help is tied to conversion rates and limited-time offers, it loses its essence. True mentorship demands patience, reciprocity and presence. It cannot be packaged into a two-hour webinar promising overnight transformation.

What this does, over time, is create mistrust. It feeds the cynicism that makes people second-guess every offer of assistance. It erodes the emotional fabric of our professional and personal communities. When everything has a price tag, sincerity becomes a rare commodity and people begin to guard themselves against disappointment.

In the mental health field, we often talk about emotional safety – the feeling that someone is genuinely there for you, without agenda or judgement. The same principle applies in professional ecosystems. Psychological safety emerges when help is authentic – when someone gives time, guidance or knowledge, not for personal gain but for the collective good.

Authentic help begins with alignment – between intention and action, between words and values. If the intent is to uplift, the action must reflect empathy, not exploitation.

Real help asks: "How can we grow together?" and not "What can I gain from this?"

In leadership, alignment is what differentiates mentors from marketers. Leadership is not about titles; it is about influence. And all of us lead in some way – whether in our homes, workplaces or communities.

When values are misaligned, when compassion becomes a branding strategy rather than a lived principle, something inside us feels off. That unease is what psychologists call dissonance: the inner conflict between what we hear and what we sense to be true. You can sense it in the tone, the urgency, the subtle shift from invitation to persuasion. True leadership is felt, not advertised. It draws people through integrity, not incentive.

And the truth is, people can feel when they are being sold a dream. The body recognises the discomfort long before the mind rationalises it. It is the tightening in your chest when someone says, "I just want to help you succeed... for only RM10,000."



"Authentic help begins with alignment – between intention and action, between words and values. If the intent is to uplift, the action must reflect empathy, not exploitation."

Disguised help takes an invisible toll on the psyche; it preys on insecurity and aspiration – on the human need to belong, to improve and to be seen.

For professionals, especially those in early growth stages, such offers can stir anxiety and self-doubt: Am I not good enough? Maybe I need this programme to succeed. This is the subtle manipulation of modern marketing, using vulnerability as a lever for conversion. And that is where ethical lines blur.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with earning through one's skills. Money, in itself, is not the enemy of authenticity; it is the intent behind the offer that defines integrity.

When expertise is priced transparently and delivered with sincerity, it empowers others. When the same promise is framed as "help", yet hides commercial motives, it erodes trust. The difference lies not in the transaction but in the truth beneath it.

If someone is truly committed to helping others grow, they will create access, not dependency. They will build capacity, not capitalise on confusion.

The real teachers and mentors I have known rarely lead with a price tag. They lead with purpose, clarity and presence, and their impact lasts long after the session ends.

Perhaps it is time to reclaim the word "help" – to strip it of pretense and restore its integrity. Real help doesn't require a countdown timer or a "limited seat" tagline; it thrives in spaces where there is mutual respect and shared learning.

As professionals and humans, we must learn to pause before offering or accepting help, and to ask:

- Is this aligned with my values? Does it feel authentic or does it feel transactional?
- Who truly benefits? Is the support creating shared growth or reinforcing dependency?
- Would I still offer this help if there were no immediate returns? This is the test of intention.

When help comes from a place of genuine service, it leaves both the giver and receiver lighter, not indebted. It uplifts without trapping.

Growth doesn't always need to be monetised. Some of the most powerful forms of progress happen in conversations, collaborations and communities that are driven by authenticity. When we choose to grow together, to share knowledge without exploitation, we create ecosystems of trust.

The irony is, this kind of growth is also the most sustainable. It nurtures goodwill, strengthens networks and cultivates resilience – the very qualities that money can't buy.

So, the next time someone offers to help you succeed – pause and listen not just to their words but to their intent because in a noisy world full of offers and "opportunities", the most radical act of authenticity may simply be to help without an agenda.

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LETTERS letters@thesundaily.com

Urgent appeal for school OSH compliance

THE tragic death of a nine-year-old student who fell into an uncovered sewage pit at a school in Lenggeng, Negeri Sembilan, has rightly raised serious questions about school safety standards in Malaysia.

We commend the Education Ministry for launching an investigation and promising strict action against anyone failing to follow safety SOPs (standard operating procedures).

However, the most important step now is to look beyond this incident and ensure that all schools comply with the mandatory Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act 1994.

As Alliance for a Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye pointed out, this was a "preventable tragedy" that highlights a deeper, systemic issue: the failure to comply with the existing OSH law.

It is essential to remember that this OSH law was specifically designed as a set of preventive steps, born out of past tragic lessons, to ensure no more lives are lost in our workplaces and public spaces.

For too long, the enforcement of OSH law by bodies like the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) has appeared lenient, especially when government bodies are involved.

With safety being a universal and "colour-blind" matter, it is now time for DOSH to step up and enforce the law without distinction between private and government sectors, ensuring all institutions comply with the OSH Act.

OSH coordinator mandatory

The foundation of safety management in our schools rests on a legal requirement that applies to all workplaces, including schools, with five or more employees:

- ***Mandatory appointment:*** Every school must appoint a trained occupational safety and health coordinator (OSH-C), as mandated by Section 29A of the OSH Act.
- ***Core duty:*** The OSH-C's primary function is to manage safety by performing HIRARC (hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control) – the formal process that should have identified the uncovered sewage pit as a deadly hazard to be fixed immediately.

Understanding legal penalties

It is critical that school authorities understand the difference in legal severity for these two breaches. Failure to appoint an OSH-C (Section 29A) is considered an administrative fault, carrying a maximum penalty of a fine not exceeding RM50,000 or imprisonment for up to six months.

However, the failure to conduct and implement the essential risk assessment, which falls under the employer's duty to manage risk, is viewed as a far more serious offence. This failure to manage risk carries a maximum penalty of a fine not exceeding RM500,000 or imprisonment for up to two years. The law is clear: failure to perform the safety work that prevents accidents is a more severe crime.



The Education Ministry must take the lead to ensure every eligible school immediately appoints an OSH-C, as mandated by the OSH Act. – ***ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN***

Three calls for collaborative action

To prevent future tragedies and ensure every school is a safe environment, we call for immediate, collaborative action:

- ***Prioritise legal compliance:*** The Education Ministry must take the lead to ensure every eligible school immediately appoints an OSH-C, as mandated by the OSH Act. The initial investigation must ensure this legal baseline is met in all schools.
- ***Seek funding and support for training:*** We urge the Education Ministry to formally collaborate with HRD Corp (Human Resources Development Corporation) to secure funding for the compulsory OSH and HIRARC training. Leveraging HRD Corp's resources can provide the necessary financial support for teachers and staff to gain specialised safety competence.
- ***Collaborate with certified safety experts:*** The ministry should work with certified external bodies and safety NGOs, such as those registered with DOSH (like Alliance for a Safe Community or similar professional associations), to provide the necessary specialised training. This partnership will ensure that school staff receive high-quality, professional instruction in OSH and risk assessment.

Schools must be safe havens for our children. It is time for every institution to commit to full, legal OSH compliance in the country.

Chin Yew Sin
Shah Alam

Budget 2026 expected to spur sales

Cash aid, tax relief and step-up financing to widen access to housing across income levels, based on early indications: Juwai IQI CEO

PETALING JAYA: Budget 2026 will boost both the supply of affordable housing and the demand for higher-end homes, according to Juwai IQI co-founder and group CEO Kashif Ansari.

"Budget 2026 creates opportunity at every level of the housing market. It will increase the supply of affordable homes while boosting demand for premium properties, making the market stronger and more balanced," he said following the government's pre-budget announcements.

Ansari said Budget 2026 sets the stage for stronger property markets across the board with targeted subsidies, major infrastructure investment, and growth initiatives under the 13th Malaysia Plan.

"We expect to see both more affordable housing for the rakyat and greater appetite for luxury property from inbound tourists and expats."

He said IQI believes the budget measures could lift 2026 residential transaction volumes by 3% to 5% from full-year 2025 levels. First-home and lower mid-market price band buyers will lead the transaction volume boost.

"The biggest driver behind these additional transactions will be the RM15 billion STR and Sara cash assistance, which will enable families to afford bigger homes. 2026 will be the first full year in which households experience the expanded RM15 billion STR/Sara allocation," said Ansari, adding that it means a family earning around RM3,000 monthly can typically only afford to pay up to RM209,000 – that is, if they aim to keep their mortgage expenses no higher than 30% of annual income. The house price they can afford jumps up to about RM279,000 with an extra RM300 a month from STR/Sara.

"A better-off family might earn about RM4,850 per month. With the assistance, they also can stretch their budget. In their case, it rises from about RM339,000 to over RM408,000, right in line with many new affordable homes in the cities.

"The STR and Sara cash assistance programmes aren't the only things that will make housing more affordable in 2026. Mortgage borrowing costs are already lower thanks to the July 2025 OPR rate cut to 2.75%. Also, the budget includes step-up financing for households without fixed income documentation via the Syarikat Jaminan Kredit Perumahan Bhd, the government-owned mortgage guarantee company. This financial support was announced in the 2025 Budget and looks like it will continue in 2026," he said.

He added that there is another programme that will have a direct impact on families' ability to buy homes. It's the three-year tax relief on mortgage interest for homes priced from RM500,000 to RM750,000. This is currently scheduled to be available to homes purchased through the end of 2027, and we believe may be extended.

"These programmes highlight why the government's decision to shift subsidies away from broad-based schemes that benefit better-off Malaysians towards targeted assistance for those truly in need is so important. By putting cash directly into households' hands, the government makes it easier for families to meet housing needs and obtain financial independence.

"Together, all of this means that a 3% to 5% uplift in transaction volumes is a prudent working estimate for the industry to rely on," said Ansari.

He pointed out that Malaysia's economic growth has been surprisingly resilient given the global situation. GDP is projected to grow between 4% and 4.8% this year and to continue growing steadily in 2026. "The government's encouragement of investment in high-value sectors like semiconductors, AI, and renewable energy directly boosts growth in sectors that will be pillars of the economy for the long term.

"When the top of the economy booms, it always spills over into property. High-value industries provide jobs with good wages that support housing demand. They also attract foreign investment and skilled talent, who need housing while living in Malaysia. That fuels demand for housing at all price levels."

Ansari said, "Malaysia's property market hit a decade-high in 2024 with 420,525 transactions worth a total of RM232.3 billion. The new data shows that, in the first half of 2025, transactions eased by 1.3% year-on-year. However, values rose by 1.9%. This is a situation of resilient pricing with softer volumes. This kind of market tends to respond quickly and disproportionately to demand-side support like the kind outlined in the budget."

"We expect transactions to grow in the second half of 2025 and in 2026. Major infrastructure investments like the Johor Bahru–Singapore Rapid Transit System Link, the Johor–Singapore Special Economic Zone, and MRT3 all support housing demand and new construction. The market is healthy and resilient, supported by high employment and economic growth," he added.



Malaysia's property sector is poised to benefit from steady GDP growth, major infrastructure projects and stronger household support in 2026. – ***BERNAMAPIX***

MyIPO starts programme to produce certified IP valuers

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Intellectual Property Corporation (MyIPO) launched the Intensive IP Valuer and Examination Programme 2025, aimed at producing certified intellectual property (IP) valuers capable of professionally assessing the commercial potential of IP in line with international standards.

MyIPO said accurate valuation enables IP to be insured, invested in, and traded on par with other physical assets, in line with the government's aspiration to position IP as a new source of economic growth.

The programme builds on MyIPO's success in developing the Malaysian IP Valuation Model since 2013, and is now enhanced through regional support under the Asean IP Valuation Model.

"This model, developed jointly with the World Intellectual Property Organisation and the Asean Working Group on Intellectual Property Cooperation, aims to standardise IP valuation practices across the region, thereby increasing market and investor confidence in the true value of IP," MyIPO said in a statement.

Participants will undergo comprehensive training modules and certification examinations that emphasize international assessment methodologies and industry best practices.

"By producing more certified IP valuers, Malaysia is ready to drive the monetisation of IP, facilitate access to financing for creators and entrepreneurs, and strengthen the country's position in the knowledge-based economy," it added.

The recent launch ceremony was officiated by MyIPO director-general Yusnieza Syarmila Yusoff and attended by more than 50 participants, including representatives from ministries and technology agencies. – Bernama

Knight Frank launches annual global luxury housing report

KUALA LUMPUR: Knight Frank has launched The Residence Report, a new annual publication offering a global perspective on luxury residential development.

At the heart of the report is the Branded Residence Survey 2025, which highlights strong sector expansion, with double-digit annual growth and a significant increase in branded schemes expected over the coming years.

The pipeline indicates more hotel-led projects, the rise of non-hotel luxury brands, and a growing number of purpose-led brands now competing with traditional hotel players.

"Luxury residential developments are moving beyond location and prestige. They are becoming centres of innovation, integrating design, lifestyle and placemaking to create environments where people can truly live, connect and belong," said Dominic Heaton-Watson, associate director for International Residential, Knight Frank Property Hub.

Adrian Yeoh, executive director for International Project Marketing, Knight Frank Property Hub said global trends are increasingly relevant to Asia-Pacific and Malaysia.

"Buyers are focused on wellness, community and long-term value rather than prestige alone. With Malaysia emerging as a potential hub for branded communities, developers here have the opportunity to align with these shifts, creating residences that are not only world-class in quality but also deeply attuned to the aspirations of local and regional buyers," he said.

The survey assessed nearly 80 luxury brands, from established hotel groups such as Four Seasons and Ritz-Carlton to newer non-hotel entrants including Bentley and Aston Martin. More than 1,000 live and pipeline schemes across 83 countries were reviewed, showing an increasingly diverse and expanding sector.

"The branded residences sector has experienced strong, sustained growth, with the number of schemes rising from 169 in 2011 to 611 today and a forecast 1,019 by 2030," said Liam Bailey, global head of research at Knight Frank.

"Unit numbers have risen sharply, from just over 27,000 in 2011 to a projected 162,000 by 2030. Growth has picked up since 2023, driven by rising demand for branded living and developers aiming for premium markets."

While growth is expected to moderate after 2028, expansion will continue, supported by greater geographic diversity and the entry of new non-hotel brands.

Currently, 82% of hotel-branded residences are co-located with a hotel, but this is expected to fall to 70% in future pipeline projects. North America and the Middle East are leading standalone hotel-branded developments, with 49% and 43% respectively planned without an adjoining hotel.

SCAN ME

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Cross-ministerial mechanism set up to counter weaponised AI

KUALA LUMPUR: The government has established a cross-ministerial and enforcement agencies mechanism to address the emerging threat of weaponised AI, which is increasingly being used for digital fraud, impersonation and large-scale cyber attacks.

Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo said yesterday this coordinated approach involves the Ministry of Digital, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Communications, CyberSecurity Malaysia, National Cyber Security Agency, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, and Royal Malaysia Police.

"It is necessary for these ministries to collaborate so that when an issue arises, we have a unit that can provide clear directives on the required actions.

"This enables us to promptly detect problems and implement measures."

The Damansara MP also informed the House that the National AI Office is currently leading discussions with various ministries to develop a national AI security framework, which includes establishing new AI technology standards, controls and regulations.

He said an initial draft of the framework has been prepared and is expected to be presented to the Cabinet by mid-next year, following an engagement process with relevant ministries and agencies.

Gobind said the plan aims to strike a balance between security needs and digital innovation. – Bernama

Selangor poised to strengthen GDP contribution

Tengku Zafrul says state helps position Malaysia as key export and investment gateway to Asean

KUALA LUMPUR: Selangor is able to increase the return on investment from its assets and continue being a major contributor (26%) to Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP), said Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz.

He said Selangor's key assets – from Port Klang and Kuala Lumpur International Airport to its industrial parks, semiconductor hub, and aerospace parks – represent a sample of the state's major strengths that can help investors tap into the growth of high-value, innovation-driven industries.

"In short, Selangor is more than Malaysia's industrial heartland – it can be an investor's launchpad into Asean.

"With world-class infrastructure, deep supply chain capabilities, and a dynamic business ecosystem, Selangor is helping position Malaysia as a key export and investment gateway to the region," he said in his keynote address at the 9th Selangor Asean Business Conference (SABC) 2025 here yesterday.

Malaysia will host the 47th Asean Leaders Summit in two weeks.

US President Donald Trump, China Premier Li Qiang and India Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Kuala Lumpur, underscoring Asean's growing role as a middle-power convenor.

Tengku Zafrul said Miti is proud to have helped shape Asean's economic agenda and strengthen Malaysia's leadership as Asean chair.

Through policies such as the New Industrial Master Plan 2030, the National Semiconductor Strategy, and the Green Investment Strategy (GIS), Malaysia has been investing in the depth and breadth of its industrial ecosystem to ensure it can weather global shocks and continue to lead.

"This was clearly reflected in Malaysia's steady growth over the past two years – 5.1% in 2024 and 4.4% in the first half of 2025," the minister said.

"While the full-year 2025 growth forecast has been revised slightly down to between 4% and 4.8% due to tariff uncertainties, rising investments show that investor confidence remains sustained and strong," he said.

Consequently, Tengku Zafrul said Miti is pleased to have laid strong policy foundations since December 2022 to reinforce the country's industrial base.

"I strongly believe that the more intense geopolitical tensions are, the faster we must act on rolling out reforms, strengthening our supply chains, and embracing sustainability.

"On that note, Selangor – with its strategic ports, world-class airports, and vibrant industrial clusters – is a natural strategic partner in championing the change that our industrial policies are targeting," he added.

By expanding Asean's market access through partnerships, such as with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and strengthening regional supply chains, Tengku Zafrul said Malaysia is growing intra-Asean exports and paving the way for businesses to scale, adapt, and lead across borders.

He said Selangor fits strategically within this Malaysia-Asean policy confluence, with the state also playing a key role in other priority Asean deliverables where Malaysia has developed industrial advantages, such as electric vehicles and semiconductors.

Miti has also focused on industrial talent, digitalisation and environmental, social and governance initiatives, the pillars of a holistic approach to future-proofing Malaysia's economy.

The ministry's investments in skills development are equipping high-value sectors such as aerospace, electrical and electronics and advanced manufacturing.

"Selangor, with its deep talent pool supported by top universities and technical institutes, is once again a natural strategic partner in achieving this ambition – and a clear beneficiary of it," Tengku Zafrul said. – Bernama

Legacy systems pose hurdles for tax tech integration, says expert

BY **JOHN GILBERT**
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PETALING JAYA: Domestic businesses of all scales are facing challenges in integrating modern tax technology into existing systems, as many companies are still using legacy accounting platforms that are not built to work seamlessly with newer digital tools.

As a result, adding solutions like e-invoicing modules or AI-powered tools can become a complex, time-consuming, and costly process.

Ernst & Young Tax Consultants Sdn Bhd associate partner, international tax and transaction services Derek Chan (***pic***) said this makes it harder for companies, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to keep up with changing tax requirements and slows down their digital transformation journey.

"Companies also need scalable solutions that can handle high transaction volumes across multiple entities, especially during peak periods like month-end or annual reporting.

"The technology adopted needs to be agile, to keep up with business developments and regular changes in tax rules. As new laws and regulations are introduced, tax teams often implement additional tools to address these.

"Over time, the tax function evolves into a patchwork of disconnected platforms, spreadsheets and manual workarounds," he told SunBiz.

Chan said that the cost of investing in technology can also be a major challenge, especially for many SMEs, as their budgets are usually tight and investing in new technology can be risky, resulting in significant unplanned costs if a clear technology strategy is not in place.

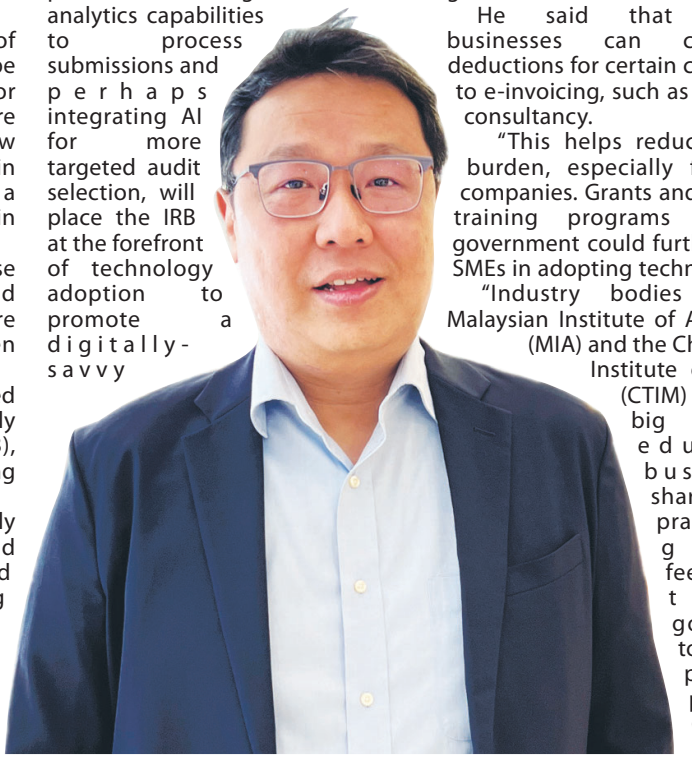
"Hence, companies must choose user-friendly technologies and service providers who are accessible and supportive when issues arise," Chan said.

Elaborating further, Chan stated that the government, particularly the Inland Revenue Board (IRB), must play a pivotal role in shaping the digital tax landscape.

He said the IRB has previously introduced new policies and technologies, such as the phased rollout of e-invoicing, providing clear directions and guidelines to taxpayers to ease the adoption of e-invoicing.

IRB's digital platforms, such as the MyTax Portal, are continually being improved to ensure they are convenient and accessible.

"Investing in the correct technology infrastructure, such as larger servers to handle all the e-filing obligations during tax peak period, enhancing data analytics capabilities to process submissions and perhaps integrating AI for more targeted audit selection, will place the IRB at the forefront of technology adoption to promote a digitally-savvy environment for businesses," Chan said.



To support this shift, Chan added the government can also offer targeted incentives and grants.

He said that currently, businesses can claim tax deductions for certain costs related to e-invoicing, such as software or consultancy.

"This helps reduce financial burden, especially for smaller companies. Grants and subsidised training programs from the government could further support SMEs in adopting technology.

"Industry bodies like the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) and the Chartered Tax Institute of Malaysia (CTIM) also play a big part by educating businesses, sharing best practices and giving feedback to the government to make sure policies are practical," Chan said.

When asked about how Ernst & Young is investing in talent and tools to stay ahead in the tax technology space in Malaysia, Chan said the firm is investing heavily in both people and technology.

"On the people side, we are upskilling our tax professionals in areas like data analytics and the use of AI. We are also hiring individuals with hybrid skill sets, those who understand both tax and technology.

"This allows us to build and manage sophisticated tools in-house and offer more innovative and practical solutions to our clients.

"On the technology front, we are building and adopting various tools that support e-invoicing, corporate tax filing, indirect tax filing and transfer pricing.

"We are continuously investing in new technologies so that we can deliver cutting-edge services to our clients at a reasonable price.

"We want to be known as a tax technology firm that uses tools to provide tax services to clients, leverages technology to advise clients in managing their pain points within their tax processes and is at the forefront of assisting clients in tax automation," Chan said.

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Selangor International Business Summit kicks off

State positions itself at forefront of Malaysia's sustainable growth and Asean integration

BY **HAYATUN RAZAK**
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KUALA LUMPUR: The Selangor International Business Summit (SIBS) 2025, organised by Invest Selangor Bhd and hosted by the Selangor State Government, kicked off yesterday with over 700 exhibitors and delegates from Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Vietnam, Korea, China, France, Saudi Arabia, and more, covering key sectors including F&B, digital economy, aerospace, industrial development, and care economy.

Menteri Besar Selangor Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari said the summit saw the launch of major green economy and fast-track investment initiatives as Selangor positions itself at the forefront of Malaysia's sustainable growth and Asean integration.

"Times are changing rapidly at the global level as we shift from a unipolar world with the United States as the single dominant power to a new world order where China continues to rise, Russia plays a pivotal role in Europe, and Southeast Asia grows in importance, especially as Malaysia chairs Asean in 2025. This SIBS is more important than ever before, as it gives deeper meaning to what we've been saying time and again, Selangor as the Gateway to Asean. By investing in Selangor, I implore you to widen your horizons to Southeast Asia's market of 680 million people," he said during the launch.

Building on RM13.86 billion in potential transactions recorded at SIBS 2024, more than double the previous year, Amirudin said this year's summit is set to unlock new opportunities for trade, partnerships and regional collaboration.

"Selangor remains a cornerstone of Malaysia's economy, contributing 26.2% of national GDP and recording 6.3% growth in 2024. Anchored by infrastructure such as Port Klang and Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the state continues to serve as Asean's hub for trade, connectivity and innovation.

"Forward-looking plans such as the First Selangor Plan (RS-1) and upcoming Second Selangor Plan (RS-2) reaffirm the state's commitment to sustainability, digitalisation and inclusivity, while thriving superclusters in aerospace, logistics and geopolitics underscore Selangor's growing role in advancing an AI-driven, sustainable economy."



Fadillah (second from left), Tengku Amir Shaha and Amiruddin at the launch.

Moving forward, Amirudin said Selangor intends to open new fronts in the rail and life sciences sectors, mainly to increase the use of public transportation among the people, and in preparation to live as an ageing society.

"This administration has taken proactive steps in the aerospace sector by working with the Federal Government to open the Selangor Aero Park (SAP), as we see tremendous potential to utilise the space surrounding KLIA as a maintenance, repair, and overhaul hub, while expanding Selangor as a regional cargo hub for goods entering into Southeast Asia," he said.

The event witnessed the launch of the Selangor Agenda for Green Economy (SAGE), a 10-year roadmap to position the state as Malaysia's leader in sustainable economic transformation which aims to attract up to RM63 billion in investments by 2035, contributing to a 35% clean-energy mix and creating thousands of quality jobs.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof said looking ahead, Asean's competitiveness will depend on how well it responds to the twin pressures of climate change and resource security.

"These are not distant challenges, they are shaping business operations, government planning, and community well-being today."

He said Malaysia's approach is to treat sustainability not as an environmental add-on, but as a core economic strategy.

"Clean energy, reliable water, and climate resilience are now drivers of competitiveness. Investors increasingly judge countries and regions by how ready they are for a low-carbon and resource-secure future," he said in his speech.

The opening ceremony was graced by Crown Prince of Selangor Tengku Amir Shah Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah.

The event also witnessed the exchange of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Air Lestari Sdn Bhd (ALSB), Heliosel Sdn Bhd, and Smartsel Sdn Bhd, subsidiaries of Menteri Besar Selangor (Incorporated), and the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM).

The collaboration seeks to explore joint efforts in water reclamation, smart manufacturing, and energy transition, leveraging MBI's innovation-driven ecosystem and FMM's vast industrial network.

Another highlight was the launch of SPEED Selangor, a policy framework underscoring the state's commitment to business efficiency, investor confidence and accelerated growth.

The initiative unifies fast-track approval systems across local councils into a single streamlined process, aiming to reduce approval times from three and a half months to nine days.

SIBS 2025 highlights include six flagship events: the Selangor International F&B Expo, Selangor Investment and Industrial Park Expo (SPARK), Selangor Asean Business Conference (SABC), Selangor Smart City & Digital Economy Convention (SDEC), Selangor Aerospace Summit (SAS) and Selangor International Care Summit (SICS).

The inaugural Selangor Aerospace Summit (SAS), held from Oct 8 to 10, replaces the Selangor Aviation Show, introducing a business-focused programme on MRO, supply chain resilience, sustainability, talent development and regional growth.

UPS open new package centre, enhances delivery services in Penang

PENANG: Global logistics leader UPS has opened a new package centre in Penang in a move that enhances services for a wide range of its customers across the city.

The company has also increased the size of its existing hub at Penang Airport to boost processing capacity and provide businesses in Penang with even more access to the global UPS network.

The 20,000 sq ft centre is located in Penang Science Park North, an area home to multiple industrial parks and popular with businesses in the high-tech and manufacturing sectors.

In a statement yesterday UPS said their new service means pickup times for exports of the company's Express and Worldwide Express Freight shipments for businesses in eight areas – including Butterworth, Batu Kawan and Bayan Lepas – are extended by up to two hours, giving customers more time to prepare outbound shipments.

Deliveries to businesses in Batu Kawan, Perai, Penang and Kulim, Kedah will now also be delivered earlier.

"This investment by UPS comes at a crucial moment as businesses adapt to shifting global trade patterns and supply chain realignments," Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida) CEO Datuk Sikh Shamsul Ibrahim Sikh Abdul Majid said.

"The new package centre in Penang, coupled with the expanded airport hub, introduces advanced automation and smarter warehousing processes that will enhance resilience and efficiency for Malaysian companies competing in time-critical sectors such as semiconductors and electronics.

"At Mida, we are committed to accelerating the adoption of Smart Warehousing and automation across the logistics sector. UPS's continued confidence in Malaysia reinforces our efforts to build a more agile supply chain ecosystem that positions the country as a preferred hub for high-value global investments."

UPS Malaysia senior managing director, Ingrid Sidiadinoto said: "When we talk to our customers, what many of them ask for is more hours in a day.

"Extending pickup times effectively gives them that; extra time to receive and ship more orders every day. Our enhanced airport hub then allows us to process these shipments efficiently when they arrive or leave on one of the 11 weekly UPS flights we have serving Penang."

In May 2025, the company launched a new service in Johor that provides businesses across the state with next-day delivery to and from countries across the Asia Pacific region.

Oasis Harvest seals RM30.8m acquisition of Metta Food & Lifestyle

BY **DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM**
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KUALA LUMPUR: Oasis Harvest Corporation Bhd has secured shareholder approval to acquire Metta Food and Lifestyle Sdn Bhd, the operator of culinary brands De.Wan 1958 by Chef Wan and Café Chef Wan, in a RM30.8 million deal that marks its entry into Malaysia's fast-growing food and beverage (F&B) sector.

More than 99.99% of shareholders voted in favour of the acquisition at the company's extraordinary general meeting (EGM), paving the way for the Bursa Malaysia-listed Oasis Harvest to integrate the Metta brands into its expanding F&B portfolio. The transaction includes a two-year profit guarantee of RM5.6 million.

"This approval represents a collective vote of confidence in our vision to build a strong, diversified F&B group," said Oasis Harvest executive director Ch'ng Eu Vern at the signing ceremony yesterday.

"The acquisition of Metta not only adds two iconic Malaysian brands to our portfolio but also unlocks exciting opportunities for growth, synergy, and brand expansion across the region."

Ch'ng said the integration of Metta with Oasis' existing brands, including the popular Uncle Don's chain and Verona Trattoria will strengthen scale, streamline supply chains and enhance operational efficiency through the use of Metta's central kitchen.

"This is just the beginning. Oasis is embarking on a proactive mergers and acquisitions (M&As) strategy to expand both organically and inorganically. Our goal is to become one of Malaysia's leading F&B conglomerates, delivering authentic dining experiences while championing Malaysian culinary excellence on the regional stage," he added.

For Chef Wan, the collaboration would provide a stronger platform to preserve and promote the country's culinary heritage.

"By joining hands with Oasis, I believe we can scale up our operations, maintain quality, and bring the richness of Malaysian cuisine to more people both locally and internationally."

Oasis Harvest, originally an investment holding company with interests in the F&B business through Uncle Don's, has been repositioning itself as a lifestyle-driven conglomerate.

The move to acquire Metta signals its commitment to building scale and diversifying into premium segments of the dining market.

Ch'ng emphasised that Oasis will continue exploring M&A as part of its growth strategy, targeting both domestic and regional opportunities.

"We are building an integrated F&B ecosystem, where each brand complements the other while benefitting from shared infrastructure and branding power.

"The opportunity ahead is enormous," said Ch'ng.

"As Malaysia strengthens its reputation as a food destination, Oasis intends to play a leading role in shaping the industry, not only through strong brands but also by setting standards in quality, service, and innovation."

BUDGET 2026 WISH LIST

Samenta calls for pro-SME budget, no new taxes

SME group urges relief, wider credit access and Asean trade boost – warns new levies could hurt recovery

PETALING JAYA: The Small and Medium Enterprises Association of Malaysia (Samenta) has urged the government to make Budget 2026 a truly pro-SME and pro-growth budget, focused on easing financial pressures, improving access to credit, and supporting intra-Asean trade; while avoiding new taxes that could slow recovery.

National president Datuk William Ng said the recently released Samenta SME Outlook Survey shows that while 65% of SMEs believe the economy is on the right track, many are still struggling with tight liquidity and rising costs.

"Seven in 10 SMEs have less than six months of cash reserves. As such, this is not the time for new taxes or additional compliance burdens," he emphasised.

He said Budget 2026 should focus on cash flow relief and competitiveness, rather than new revenue measures.

"Any form of new or expanded tax would further erode the resilience of our SMEs. Instead, the government should expand access to affordable financing. We urge the government to increase the capacity and coverage of the credit guarantee schemes so that more SMEs can obtain financing without heavy collateral requirements," Ng said.

Despite being the closest neighbour, he noted that intra-Asean trade remains around 21%.

"The recent tariff challenges and supply chain disruptions have highlighted the urgency to near-shore production and strengthen regional supply chain. We call on the government to provide tax incentives for expenses related to developing intra-Asean markets and supply chains. This will encourage SMEs to invest in regional partnerships, joint ventures, and export networks within Asean," he added.

He opined that this is even more crucial given the intention to move from 'Made in Malaysia' to 'Made by Malaysia'.

"Assistance must move beyond traditional support for local manufacturing to enabling innovation, intellectual property development, and globalisation of Malaysian brands," he noted.

Samenta's key recommendations for Budget 2026 include no new or expanded taxes that increase compliance or cost burdens on SMEs; expansion of credit guarantee schemes and introduction of revenue-based or unsecured lending to widen access to financing; support for small-scale automation and digitalisation through co-funding, training, and advisory programmes; and tax incentives for ESG adoption such as deductions or preferential loan rates for SMEs meeting sustainability milestones.

Samenta also recommended recognition of intra-Asean market development expenses as deductible costs to encourage regional expansion and supply chain participation; and regional balancing, ensuring SMEs in the East Coast, Sabah, and Sarawak receive equal access to infrastructure, financing, and training.

As the first budget under the 13th Malaysian Plan, Ng said, Budget 2026 must help SMEs move from survival to competitiveness, and from being suppliers to becoming innovators and regional players.

"We don't need more one-off grants; we need an ecosystem that rewards innovation, digitalisation, and regional integration. SMEs are Malaysia's backbone. A supportive, inclusive, and regionally focused Budget 2026 will not only sustain us but also drive Malaysia's long-term competitiveness across Asean," he added.

Ng assured that Samenta is ready to work with the government to translate Budget 2026 policies into real impact on the ground.

Digital banks eye bigger role in subsidy, cash aid distribution

KUALA LUMPUR: Digital banks are urging the government to prioritise the distribution of targeted subsidies and cash aid in Budget 2026 through digital banking platforms, highlighting their potential to deliver a more equitable and efficient system.

The first operational digital bank – GX Bank Bhd – said digital banks are also seen as crucial partners in national development, enhancing the secure and efficient distribution of government aid to ensure subsidies reach Malaysians directly and effectively in managing cost-of-living pressures.

"In this regard, a single, unified digital platform should be established to manage all national subsidies and cash assistance programmes," GXBank told Bernama in a written response.

At present, the government's aid initiatives such as targeted subsidies and cash handouts, are channelled through various platforms, including e-wallet and MyKad.

Malaysia's Islamic digital bank KAF Digital Bank Bhd CEO Rafiza Ghazali has called for stronger collaboration between digital banks, the government and industry players, emphasising that digital banks should not work in isolation and that stronger partnerships will be essential moving forward.

Ryt Bank, a next-generation artificial intelligence (AI)-powered digital bank, believes a single distribution platform via a digital bank, which is enabled by electronic know-your-customer processes, would be able to reduce fiscal leakages, thus ensuring fairer distribution of aid and promoting greater financial inclusion.

The bank also hopes that Budget 2026 will introduce tiered subsidies for entrepreneurs to acquire digital devices, linked to digital bank onboarding and digital platform adoption.

"Subsidies could increase with milestones such as signing up with a digital bank, registering on e-commerce platforms like Shopee and achieving sales targets – all aimed at accelerating digital adoption and financial inclusion among small businesses," said Ryt Bank.

GXBank has also called for a government-backed guarantee scheme for micro loans to enable financial institutions to unlock critical capital for micro, small and medium enterprises.

It said such a scheme could create a powerful multiplier effect on national growth while providing a safer alternative to unlicensed money lenders.

Senheng pushes for faster green tech adoption in Budget wishlist

PETALING JAYA: Senheng New Retail Bhd, a consumer electrical and electronics retailer, has called for the government to accelerate green technology adoption with Malaysians prioritising affordable and green living solutions.

Executive chairman and managing director Lim Kim Heng (*pix*) said the overwhelming demand for government rebates on energy-efficient appliances proves the public is eager to make these purchases.

"We hope to see more rebate funds, as well as personal income tax relief for solar adoption. These incentives will help ease the financial burden on families and stimulate the retail sector, while increasing technology penetration and greener practices," he added.

With proven solutions such as affordable solar packages, energy-efficient appliances, and reliable after-sales service, he said, the company is well-placed to support the government to meet this growing *rakyat* demand through targeted incentives.

He also pointed out that despite steady economic growth, consumers remain cautious with spending while businesses also navigate rising operational costs.

"The retail sector must transition from traditional methods to a tech-driven model that prioritises efficiency and service. To address this, targeted tax incentives that encourage retailers to invest in AI and technology, alongside employee training. This will enable businesses to better meet consumer demands, pass on savings to consumers, and provide better services," remarked Lim.

For many businesses, he said a slowdown in consumer purchasing and fierce e-commerce competition creates immense pressure and digital transformation is essential for survival.



"We value stronger collaboration opportunities with government agencies to extend the pioneering technology insights of our New Retail Model to the wider retail community. This public-private partnership will accelerate nationwide digital adoption and help ensure no business is left behind," said Lim when outlining the Budget 2026 wishlist.

Despite steady economic growth, he emphasised that many consumers remain cautious with spending while businesses also navigate rising operational costs and this creates hesitancy that prevents consumers from making purchases and hampers local businesses.

To address these challenges, he said the retail sector must transition from traditional methods to a tech-driven model that prioritise efficiency and service.

"AI and machine learning are essential tools for achieving this, enabling businesses to become more efficient, pass on savings to customers, and provide better services," said Lim, adding that Senheng, as a leader in AI adoption within the consumer electronics retail industry, has seen firsthand how these investments can lead to operational excellence and better consumer experiences.

"We urge for targeted tax incentives to encourage retailers to invest in technology and employee training. This will enable businesses to better meet consumer demands," he said, adding that the government's focus on digital transformation is highly important.

Doppa advocates carbon trading for sustainable income in rural communities

KUALA LUMPUR: The Sarawak Dayak Oil Palm Planters Association (Doppa) is calling for a groundbreaking initiative that integrates carbon trading to provide a stable income for rural communities in Sarawak.

Its president Dr Napolean R Ningkos said that with approximately 1.7 million ha of Native Customary Rights (NCR) land featuring significant forest cover, there is strong potential for these areas to make a substantial contribution to environmental conservation and community welfare.

"In alignment with the national No Deforestation, No Peat, No Exploitation policy, Doppa also urges the government to implement a mechanism that compensates landowners for preserving their forested NCR lands.

"This initiative would not only support national environmental goals but also ensure that smallholders receive a sustainable income without resorting to expanding oil palm cultivation," he said in a statement to Bernama.

DOPPA also emphasised the need for a more effective replanting incentive scheme in Sarawak, highlighting that less than 1% of the 48,000 independent smallholders in Sarawak have succeeded in their application to participate in the scheme.

The association attributes this to the cumbersome bureaucratic processes, particularly the verification of land applications by the Department of Land and Survey, Sarawak, which often requires an extended time period to complete all necessary checks.

He explained that the current scheme demands land title or status verification, thus delaying the approval process.

The association also proposed that the government introduce a grant of RM9,000 per ha as an incentive for smallholders who have completed their replanting, as this initiative could significantly alleviate development costs for independent smallholders.

COSWAY
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FTSE to upgrade Vietnam to emerging market status

Decision follows market-friendly reforms by Communist govt



A man walks past the Hanoi Stock Exchange building. – ***REUTERSPIC***

HANOI: Vietnam's benchmark stock index hit a record high yesterday as the government and investors alike welcomed FTSE Russell's announcement that the country was set to be upgraded to emerging market status.

The upgrade from frontier market status – a designation that prevents many passive funds from buying shares of locally listed companies – is expected to unlock billions of dollars in foreign investment as well as boost its IPO market.

It puts Vietnam on par with markets like India and China and follows market-friendly reforms by the Communist-ruled country.

The decision is "a milestone for the Vietnamese market ... opening the door for a new phase of development", Vietnam's State Securities Commission said in a statement.

The Ho Chi Minh stock index climbed 2% in early trade to hit a record of 1,735, though it later pared some of those gains and was last up 1%.

It is up by a third for the year to date – the best-performing stock market in Southeast Asia by a wide margin – powered by a huge surge in bank lending, recent IPOs and plans for listings as well as expectations of the FTSE Russell announcement which had been flagged by Vietnam's finance minister last month.

FTSE Russell projected that Vietnam would see $6 billion in redirected inflows following the upgrade, which will be effective Sept 21, 2026 pending an interim review in March.

The decision is also expected to help Vietnam at a time of steep challenges presented by US President Donald Trump's tariff policies.

Vietnamese goods have been hit with a 20% US tariff since Aug 7, which could cut the country's exports there by up to 20%, making it Southeast Asia's hardest-hit economy, according to a report by the United Nations Development Programme.

The "FTSE upgrade of Vietnam's equity markets sends a strong signal to global investors that this export powerhouse can withstand the near-term trade headwinds", Suvir Loomba, HSBC's regional head of securities services, Asia, said in a statement.

The Ho Chi Minh stock index began with just two companies in 2000.

It is now comprised of some 390 companies with steelmaker Hoa Phat, Military Commercial JSC Bank and conglomerate Vingroup, the parent of Nasdaq-listed automaker Vinfast, among the most well known to foreign investors.

The country's IPO market remains small but momentum has gathered this year.

After only one listing in 2024, there have been two offerings this year – brokerage Techcom Securities which last month raised US$410 million (RM1.7 billion), the most in years, at a valuation of about US$4 billion and hospitality firm Vinpearl which took in US$190 million at a valuation of US$4.9 billion.

Another three have announced IPO plans.

Vietnam-focused private equity fund Dragon Capital anticipates around a dozen new listings by 2028.

Analysts said the upgrade decision has been largely factored in and predict little upside in the near-term, adding that Vietnam must still grapple with high interest rates and depreciation in the dong.

Gary Tan, portfolio manager at Allspring Global Investments, noted that foreign investors have been net sellers through August and September, likely taking profits ahead of the upgrade announcement.

He added that the country still needed to address "structural hurdles such as foreign ownership limits, especially in banking, alongside improvements in market infrastructure and regulatory transparency".

"These reforms will be critical to unlocking deeper and longer-term foreign capital flows," he said. – Reuters

New Zealand delivers jolt to frail economy with 50-bp rate cut

WELLINGTON: New Zealand's central bank slashed its benchmark rate by an aggressive 50 basis points yesterday, surprising some in the markets as policymakers signalled concerns about the frail state of the economy and kept the door open for further easing.

The New Zealand dollar and interest rate swaps tumbled in the wake of the move that took the official cash rate to over a three-year low of 2.5%, as investors bet on more stimulus in the coming months to shore up demand and buffer the economy from rising global headwinds.

"The Committee reached consensus to reduce the official cash rate by 50 basis points to 2.5%," the Reserve Bank of New Zealand said in its accompanying policy statement.

"The Committee remains open to further reductions in the OCR as required for inflation to settle sustainably near the 2% target mid-point in the medium term."

The dovish stance will be a welcome relief for the New Zealand government and Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, whose popularity has taken a sharp hit in recent months as the economic recovery he and his party campaigned on has failed to eventuate.

Luxon has said publicly he would like to see the cash rate lower to try and shake off the economic torpor, with business confidence worsening and households in a depressed mood as they fret about the rising cost of living and scarcity of jobs.

The Taxpayers' Union-Curia Poll released earlier yesterday found that the current government would not have enough seats to govern if an election was held today.

Finance Minister Nicola Willis said the rate cut is good news for growth, jobs and investment, adding: "We know many New Zealanders are still doing it tough." – Reuters

Thai central bank unexpectedly holds rates, trims growth forecast

BANGKOK: Thailand's central bank left its key interest rate steady yesterday, surprising markets which had expected another cut as the economy struggles with a strengthening baht, negative inflation and US tariffs.

The Bank of Thailand's monetary policy committee voted five to two to keep the one-day repurchase rate steady at 1.50%. The BOT has cut rates four times in the past year.

"The transmission of previous policy rate cuts to the economy is ongoing," the central bank said in a statement.

The BOT said it now expects the economy to grow 2.2% this year and 1.6% in 2026, slightly lower than previous forecasts of 2.3% and 1.7%, respectively. Last year's growth was 2.5%.

"The economy in the second half of 2025 throughout 2026 is expected to slow down due to the impacts of US trade policies," the central bank said.

Only six of 26 economists in a Reuters poll had predicted rates would be kept steady at Wednesday's review, the first for new BOT governor Vitai Ratanakorn.

Nineteen economists had predicted a 25 basis point cut, and one had forecast a 50 bps cut.

Among those who provided a longer-term outlook on rates in the poll, 13 of 21 economists expected the policy rate to be at 1.25% by the end of 2025.

The remaining eight saw it at 1.00%.

The forecast for headline inflation this year was cut to zero, from 0.5% previously. The inflation rate has been negative for the past six months, well below the central bank's target range of 1% to 3%, but the BOT said deflationary risks were low.

The BOT said inflation was expected to be 0.5% in 2026, before it returns to the target range by early 2027.

Southeast Asia's second-largest economy has lagged peers as it struggles with US tariffs, high household debt, weak consumption, and a strong currency.

On Tuesday, Finance Minister Ekniti Nitithanprapas said the government would spend 44 billion baht (RM5.7 billion) on a consumer subsidy programme and will roll out other stimulus measures to try to lift growth above 2.2% this year.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul's new government has a limited window to implement its measures, with the premier planning to dissolve Parliament by the end of January with a general election to be held in March or early April. – Reuters

WTO hikes 2025 trade growth outlook but tariffs to bite in 2026

GENEVA: AI-related goods and a surge in exports to the United States to beat President Donald Trump's tariff hikes boosted global merchandise trade growth this year, the World Trade Organisation said on Tuesday.

However, the picture is bleaker for 2026, the WTO warned, as the impact of those tariffs kicks in.

The WTO raised its forecast for trade volume growth in 2025 to 2.4% – up from 0.9% in August – and slashed its 2026 outlook from 1.8% to 0.5%.

"Global merchandise trade outpaced expectations in the first half of 2025, driven by increased spending on AI-related products, a surge in North American imports ahead of tariff hikes, and strong trade among the rest of the world," the WTO said, as it published its updated global trade outlook.

Since returning to office in January, Trump has slapped several waves of new tariffs on imports entering the US.

"Countries' measured response to tariff changes in general, the growth potential of AI, as well as increased trade among the rest of the world – particularly among emerging economies – helped ease trade setbacks in 2025," WTO director-general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said.

The international body said artificial intelligence-related goods – including semiconductors, servers, and telecommunications equipment – drove nearly half of the overall trade expansion in the first six months of the year, rising 20% year-on-year in value terms.

Over those six months, "42% of global trade growth came from AI-related goods – far out of proportion to their 15% share in world trade", Okonjo-Iweala told a press conference.

But the Nigerian ex-finance minister said trade resilience this year should not fool countries into "complacency".

"Today's disruptions to the global trade system are a call to action for nations to reimagine trade and together lay a stronger foundation that delivers greater prosperity for people everywhere."

The report predicted that all regions will record weaker import performance in 2026 as higher tariff rates and heightened trade policy uncertainty bite. – AFP

Tesla debuts 'affordable' versions of Model Y and 3

Cars drop some premium features but offer over 480km of range

NEW YORK: Tesla rolled out "affordable" versions of its best-selling Model Y SUV and its Model 3 sedan, but the starting prices of US$39,990 and US$36,990 were too high, some said, to attract a new class of buyers to the electric vehicle brand.

CEO Elon Musk has touted the car as a way to tap a wider swath of buyers, saying last year that a price below US$30,000, after incentives, was the key.

Tesla is trying to reverse falling sales of its aging lineup amid rising competition in Europe and China, and the loss of a US$7,500 American tax credit. The new cars drop some premium finishes and features but offer driving ranges above 480km.

Tesla's stock closed down 4.5% and Tesla bull Dan Ives, an analyst at Wedbush, said he was disappointed the cars were only about US$5,000 cheaper than the next-level trims of the models.

The new Standard versions cost more than the cheapest US models in September, when the now-expired tax credit was included.

Musk has for years promised mass-market vehicles, though last year he cancelled plans for an all-new US$25,000 EV, Reuters first reported.

Instead, he chose to build lower-priced versions based on Tesla's current models, sparking concerns among investors and analysts that the cheaper cars would cannibalise sales of existing vehicles and limit growth.

"It's basically a pricing lever and not much of a product catalyst. I don't see it as unlocking new demand at scale," said Shay Boloor, chief market strategist at research firm Futurum Equities.

Fearing a drop in demand after losing the tax credits, some automakers in the US have already cut prices while some others have figured out mechanisms to effectively extend the benefit of the incentives.

Investors and analysts said dropping the price below US$40,000 will help drive sales as the latest offerings compete next year with Chevrolet's Equinox, Hyundai Ioniq 5 and Kia's EV4. Some, though, expected a bigger slash by Tesla to below US$30,000.

"Longer term, this news doesn't solve the problem posed by lower cost Chinese competitors in global markets. In my opinion, Tesla needs a sub-30k EV," said Shawn Campbell, an adviser at Camelthorn Investments.

In Europe, where Musk's far-right political views have undermined brand loyalty, the new entries will be up against more than a dozen electric and plug-in-hybrid models with price tags below US$30,000.

Sales in the September-ending quarter rose to a record as consumers rushed to take advantage of the EV tax credit before its expiration on Sept 30, 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."

Both Standard versions offer 516km of range and less powerful acceleration than the current higher trims, called Premium.

Tesla has reduced the size of the battery on both cars, according to its website and some influencers who got a preview.

Both cars can be ordered immediately, with deliveries set to start between December 2025 and January 2026 for many locations.

The Standard versions do not come with Autosteer, Tesla's driver assistance system, touchscreens and seat heating for rear passengers.

Tesla has also removed the LED lightbar in the cheaper Model Y.

Both come with manually adjusted side-view mirrors and textile seats, with vegan leather available for the Model 3.

"For the market, this is Tesla dropping its Steve Jobs turtleneck and slipping into a Walmart hoodie," said Michael Ashley Schulman, chief investment officer at Running Point.

"It's no longer the cool rebel at the edge of innovation – it's the establishment trying to play both Tesla and Toyota at once." – Reuters

SoftBank buys robotics firm to advance 'physical AI'

TOKYO: Tech investment giant SoftBank Group said yesterday it will buy Swiss-Swedish firm ABB Robotics for nearly US$5.4 billion as part of its plans to bring artificial intelligence into the physical realm.

ABB Robotics specialises in industrial robots, such as large robotic arms that can make precise movements in factories.

Japan's SoftBank – a major investor in ChatGPT creator OpenAI – said the acquisition was part of its AI-focused business strategy.

"SoftBank's next frontier is Physical AI," SoftBank CEO Masayoshi Son said in a statement.

"We will unite world-class technology and talent under our shared vision to fuse Artificial Super Intelligence and robotics – driving a groundbreaking evolution that will propel humanity forward."

ABB Group issued a separate statement to announce the agreed sale of its robotics division to SoftBank for US$5.37 billion.

The purchase will combine "ABB Robotics' leading technology and industry expertise with SoftBank's state-of-the-art capabilities in AI, robotics and next-generation computing", it said.

The transaction is expected to close in mid- to late-2026 pending regulatory approval.

ABB Robotics has a workforce of around 7,000, and its 2024 revenues of US$2.3 billion represented around 7% of ABB Group's total income.

ABB Group had previously planned to spin off the robotics business as a separately listed company.

SoftBank has pledged to plough at least US$100 billion into US President Donald Trump's Stargate project to build AI infrastructure in the United States. – AFP



Collaborative dual-arm robot YuMi at the ABB booth at the Hannover Messe industrial trade fair in Hanover, central Germany. – ***AFPPIC***

OpenAI, Anthropic eye investor funds to settle AI lawsuits: FT

LONDON: OpenAI and Anthropic are exploring the use of investor funds to settle potential multibillion-dollar lawsuits, the *Financial Times* reported yesterday.

Copyright owners have launched a series of high-stakes lawsuits against tech firms, including OpenAI, Microsoft , and Meta Platforms, alleging unauthorised use of their material to train AI systems.

OpenAI, which has tapped Aon, has secured coverage of up to US$300 million for emerging AI risks, the report said, citing people familiar with the company's policy.

However, another person disputed this figure, claiming it was significantly lower, the newspaper said, adding that all agreed the coverage falls far short of what is needed to protect against potential losses from a series of multibillion-dollar legal claims.

Kevin Kalinich, head of cyber risk at Aon, told the newspaper that the insurance sector broadly lacks "enough capacity for (model) providers".

OpenAI has considered "self-insurance" by setting aside investor funding, with discussions about establishing a "captive", a ringfenced insurance vehicle used by large companies to manage emerging risks, the report said.

OpenAI, Anthropic and Aon did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment.

Last month, a judge in California preliminarily approved a landmark US$1.5 billion settlement of a copyright class action brought by a group of authors against Anthropic.

Anthropic is partly using its own funds to cover potential settlements, the FT report said, citing a person with knowledge of the matter. – Reuters

German industrial output posts biggest decline in three years

BERLIN: German industrial output fell much further than expected in August, pushed down by a sharp decrease in car production as frontloaded demand ahead of US tariffs dried up.

Industrial production fell by 4.3% compared with the previous month, the federal statistics office said yesterday, the biggest fall since March 2022, just after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Analysts polled by Reuters had predicted a 1% fall.

The less volatile three-month on three-month comparison showed that production was 1.3% lower in June-August than in the previous three months.

Production in Germany's largest industrial branch, the automotive industry, fell by 18.5% on the previous month due to the combination of annual plant closures for holidays and production changeovers, the statistics office said.

Demand from Germany's top trading partner the US has slowed following months of buying ahead in anticipation of tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump.

"Even if there might be some one-off factors at play, we fear that the sharp drop in industrial production also heavily reflects the end of U.S. frontloading,"said Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro at ING.

He warned that the "extremely disappointing" industrial data in August increased the risk of yet another quarter of contraction for the German economy, which shrank by 0.3% in the second quarter compared with the first three months of the year.

Ralph Solveen, senior economist at Commerzbank, said: "Today's figures are a further indication that the German economy hardly grew at all in the third quarter." – Reuters

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SCAN ME

Crypto bid to tokenise shares stirs concern

Officials warn of potential fallout as blockchain ventures widen asset offerings

NEW YORK: A race by crypto companies to sell tokens pegged to stocks is raising alarm bells among traditional financial firms and regulatory experts who warn that the fast-growing novel products pose risks to investors and market stability.

Buoyed by President Donald Trump's pro-crypto stance and his administration's push for friendly regulations, the crypto industry is rushing to capitalise on a global surge in enthusiasm for the sector.

Robinhood, Gemini and Kraken among others have launched tokenised stocks in Europe, while Coinbase, Robinhood and startup Dinari are seeking approval to launch similar products in the US. Nasdaq, meanwhile, last month became the first major exchange to propose offering tokenised shares.

The industry says tokenised shares — blockchain-based instruments that track traditional equities — could revolutionise stock markets by allowing shares to be traded 24/7 and settled instantly, boosting liquidity and reducing transaction costs. The combined value of tokenised public stocks geared toward retail investors as of September grew to US$412 million (RM1.7 billion), compared with just a few million dollars 12 months ago, according to tokenisation tracker RWA.xyz.

Although many products are marketed like stocks, they rarely offer the same rights, disclosures and protections as traditional equities. Instead, they more closely resemble riskier derivatives, according to a Reuters review of several products and interviews with a dozen industry executives and legal experts. That increases the hazards for investors, while tokenisation more broadly could undermine market integrity and fragment liquidity if left unsupervised, critics say.

"You're buying exposures to those shares through creating some sort of synthetic instrument," said Diego Ballon Ossio, a partner at law firm Clifford Chance in London. "A lot of the burden gets shifted on you to understand what exactly it is that you're buying."

A few companies have issued their own experimental stock tokens on the blockchain – software that acts as a shared digital ledger – but most tokenised shares are pegged to public companies and issued by third parties like Ondo Global Markets and Dinari. Some tokens are backed 1:1 by underlying stocks, while others provide economic exposure through derivatives.

The industry is divided over which regulations apply to stock tokens, and investor rights and protections vary. Often, the products provide no ownership, voting rights or traditional dividends, while creating counterparty risk exposure to the token issuer.

For example, there are multiple tokens pegged to Nvidia and Tesla with a range of structures and terms and conditions.

"The fact that different tokenised offerings have different rights and different disclosures – that's a real big worry," said Gabriel Otte, CEO of Dinari, which offers 1:1 collateralisation. Robinhood in June launched trading in tokens pegged to public companies and said it plans to offer tokenised stocks of private companies. To promote the launch, it gave away tokens pegged to OpenAI. Those tokens are derivative contracts backed by Robinhood's ownership of fund units in a special-purpose vehicle that holds OpenAI convertible notes, according to its terms and conditions. The announcement drew pushback from OpenAI, which said it had not blessed the offering. It also prompted scrutiny from Robinhood's European regulator.

In Europe, Robinhood, Kraken and others operate under the "MiFID" derivatives rules but some legal experts say that law is insufficient to oversee the novel products. Trump's crypto-friendly chair of the US Securities and Exchange Commission Paul Atkins has indicated the agency plans to grant would-be issuers exemptions from securities rules.

That plan is facing opposition from powerful Wall Street players including Citadel Securities and the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association, which say such major structural changes should go through a formal rulemaking process.

"Just because a security is represented on blockchain, that doesn't change the core investor protections and other provisions that apply to securities," said Peter Ryan, head of international capital markets at SIFMA. In a July letter to the SEC, Citadel Securities raised concerns that tokenisation would siphon liquidity away from public markets.

Spokespeople for the SEC declined to comment, while Citadel Securities did not provide comment beyond the letter.

A spokesman for the European Securities and Markets Authority, which helps oversee MiFID, said it was aware of the potential risks of tokenisation and was monitoring developments. The World Federation of Exchanges recently urged regulators to crack down on tokenisation, citing insufficient investor protections and liquidity fragmentation, although the group told Reuters it supports Nasdaq's proposal because it would treat tokens like traditional stocks.

Coinbase is also in talks with the SEC about launching tokenised securities that would similarly grant investors the full legal rights and benefits associated with conventional stocks, according to a source familiar with the matter. – Reuters

Gold breaks US$4,000 mark in record-setting rally

BENGALURU: Gold extended its historic rally to break above US$4,000 (RM16,848) an ounce for the first time yesterday, as investors piled into the safe haven to seek cover from mounting geopolitical uncertainty while betting on more US interest rate cuts.

Spot gold jumped 1.2% to US$4,032.46 per ounce by 0653 GMT. US gold futures for December delivery climbed 1.3% to US$4,054.80 per ounce.

Traditionally, gold is seen as a store of value during times of instability. As one of the best-performing assets of 2025, spot gold is up 53% year-to-date after rising 27% in 2024.

The rally has been driven by a cocktail of factors including expectations of interest rate cuts, ongoing political and economic uncertainty, solid central bank buying, inflows into gold exchange-traded funds and a weak dollar.

"There's so much faith in this trade right now that the market will look for the next big round number which is 5,000 with the Fed likely to continue to lower rates," said Tai Wong, an independent metals trader.

"There will be some bumps in the road like a lasting truce in the Mideast or Ukraine but the fundamental drivers of the trade, massive and growing debt, reserve diversification, and a weaker dollar are unlikely to change in the medium term."

Adding to the uncertainties, the US government shutdown entered its 7th day on Tuesday. The shutdown has postponed the release of key economic indicators from the world's biggest economy, forcing investors to rely on secondary, non-government data to gauge the timing and extent of Fed rate cuts.

Investors are now pricing in a 25-basis-point cut at the Fed meeting this month, with an additional 25-bp cut anticipated in December.

"Rising uncertainty levels tend to fuel gains in the gold price and we are seeing this theme play out again," said KCM Trade Chief Market Analyst Tim Waterer.

"Market dynamics of lower US interest rates and the ongoing government shutdown are still working in favour of gold. But the temptation to take profits around the US$4,000 mark pose a potential short-term risk."



A worker polishes gold bullion bars at the ABC Refinery in Sydney. Gold's relentless rise reached another milestone yesterday as the precious metal hit US$4,002.95 an ounce for the first time. – ***AFPPIX***

A "fear of missing out" is also boosting the rally, analysts say.

Additionally, political turmoil in France and Japan has also boosted demand for the safe-haven bullion.

Analysts expect strong inflows into exchange-traded funds backed by physical gold, central bank buying and the prospect of lower US interest rates to support gold prices in 2026, prompting Goldman Sachs and UBS to raise their price outlooks.

"With the US$4,000 barrier broken, new technical horizons have opened. The next resistance levels are seen around US$4,050 to US$4,100, while former resistance at US$3,900 now serves as the first support zone," said Alexander Zumpfe, a precious metals trader at Heraeus Metals Germany.

In other precious metals markets, spot silver rose 1.6% to US$48.57 per ounce, platinum gained 1.6% to US$1,644.40 and palladium climbed 3.1% to US$1,378.86. – Reuters

US air traffic control staffing hit for second day, delaying flights

WASHINGTON: Air traffic control staffing issues are delaying flights for a second straight day at numerous US airports as the government shutdown reaches its seventh day, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said in a notice on Tuesday.

More than 3,000 flights have been delayed, according to flight tracking data, as staffing shortages have impacted a widening number of airports including Houston, Nashville, Dallas, Chicago O'Hare and Newark.

The FAA is reducing the number of arriving flights per hour at Chicago O'Hare, citing staffing, with average delays of 41 minutes, and there are also staffing issues at Atlanta Air Route Traffic Control Centre.

Arriving flights were being held for up to 30 minutes at Newark due to the staffing issues, the FAA said, while Washington Reagan might see new slowdowns due to low staffing on Tuesday.

Nashville air traffic control is facing significant staffing issues and will curtail operations later on Tuesday, the FAA said. Approach control will be taken over later by Memphis Centre, it added.

Both political parties are pointing the finger at each other for the impacts. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Democrats were to blame for the aviation slowdown, while California Governor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, said President Donald Trump was responsible.

Severe weather is also impacting flights across the country.

Some 13,000 air traffic controllers and about 50,000 Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers must still turn up for work during the government shutdown, but they are not being paid. Controllers are set to receive a partial paycheck on Oct 14 for work performed before the shutdown.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said on Monday the FAA had seen a slight increase in controllers taking sick leave and air traffic staffing has been cut by 50% in some areas since the shutdown started last week. – Reuters

MARKET ROUND-UP: OCT 8

8-Oct-2025 Bursa Malaysia

Trade Statistics

	Net (in RM million):	Participation
Retail	+26.68	17.47%
Institutions	+281.13	46.17%
Foreign	-307.81	36.36%

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Berjaya Research
Preliminary statistics (excluding trade amendments). For final data, please refer to www.bursamalaysia.com.

QR Code to register for 1-to-1 Coaching

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- Monthly Traders' Talk for directions & positioning
- Company coverage & trading insights
- One-to-One trading coaching (available upon request)

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

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

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Bursa Indices

INDEX		CHANGE
FBMEMAS	12,114.60	-12.72
FBMKLCI	1,627.50	-2.53
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	521.74	+2.35
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	173.52	-0.07
CONSTRUCTION	326.47	-0.14
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,528.33	-43.62
ENERGY	792.03	+11.46
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	493.50	-1.88
HEALTH CARE	1,587.70	+3.45
TRANSPORTATION	1,018.36	+2.29
PROPERTY	1,052.04	-3.56
PLANTATION	7,830.48	+36.63
FBMSHA	12,120.55	-12.79
FBMACE	5,269.03	-42.38
TECHNOLOGY	62.72	-0.78

TURNOVER: 3.665 bil **VALUE: RM2.716 bil**

Bursa extends loss amid weaker regional markets

BURSA Malaysia extended its losses to close marginally lower yesterday, mirroring the weaker regional markets amid growing concerns over a prolonged US government shutdown.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI dipped 2.53 points, or 0.16%, to 1,627.50, from Tuesday's close of 1,630.03.

The benchmark index had opened 1.88 points lower at 1,628.15, and hit its lowest level at 1,621.17 earlier in the trading session.

The market breadth was negative, with 623 decliners outpacing 463 gainers, while 475 counters were unchanged, 1,023 remained untraded, and eight were suspended.

IPPFA Sdn Bhd's director of investment strategy and country economist Mohd Sedek Jantan said market sentiment is turning defensive amid rising concerns that the fiscal impasse in Washington could extend beyond one month.

Among the heavyweight counters, Maybank gained five sen to RM10, while Public Bank slipped two sen to RM4.34, and CIMB Group lost 10 sen to RM7.66. Tenaga Nasional dipped eight sen to RM13.20, and IHH Healthcare dropped nine sen to RM8.10.

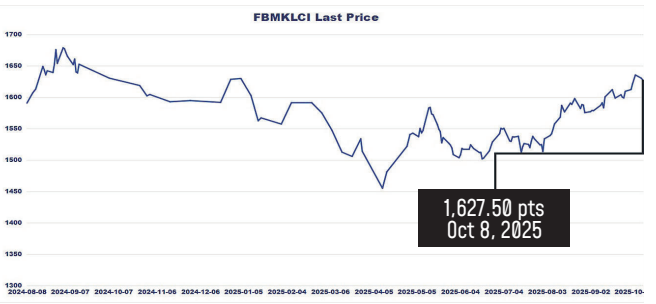
On the most active list, KNM Group and Borneo Oil were both unchanged at half a sen, while VS Industry was flat at 55.5 sen. Zetrix AI slipped half a sen to 83.5 sen, and Tanco dipped one sen to 85 sen.

Of the top gainers, Nestle bounced RM1.64 to RM99.30, and Hi Mobility soared 32 sen to RM2.72, while PPB and Kuala Lumpur Kepong added 30 sen each to RM10.98 and RM20.60, respectively. Sunway Construction grew 26 sen to RM6.15.

As for the top decliners, Malaysian Pacific Industries fell 66 sen to RM30.82, Hong Leong Industries dropped 22 sen each to RM14.02, and KSL gave up 16 sen to RM2.80. Unisem lost 14 sen to RM3.42, and Mesiniaga trimmed 10 sen to RM1.27. – Bernama

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/-(RM)	+/-(%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-CWI3	0.130	-0.010	-7.14	3,594,770
HSI-CWKS	0.110	-0.010	-8.33	3,281,342
HSI-PWJY	0.185	+0.005	+2.78	1,598,020
KNM	0.005	-	-	1,280,324
HSI-PWLQ	0.130	+0.015	+13.04	951,072
ZETRIX	0.835	-0.005	-0.60	762,572
HSI-PWJ8	0.105	+0.015	+16.67	643,416
TANCO	0.850	-0.010	-1.16	636,317
ZETRIX-C9N	0.060	-0.005	-7.69	500,000
HSI-CWKC	0.180	-0.025	-12.20	469,372
HSI-PWLB	0.125	+0.010	+8.70	441,046
HENGYUAN-R1	0.135	-0.045	-25.00	389,071
VS	0.555	-	-	376,457
BORNOIL	0.005	-	-	372,983
PHARMA	0.280	-0.005	-1.75	348,662
CHEEDING	0.800	+0.065	+8.84	334,471
SPSETIA	0.935	-0.035	-3.61	326,604
HSI-CWI0	0.385	-0.070	-15.39	287,194
L&G	0.165	+0.010	+6.45	263,384
XOXTECH	0.110	+0.005	+4.76	260,961



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	99.300	+1.640	737
HI	2.720	+0.320	33,738
KLK	20.600	+0.300	1,967
PPB	10.980	+0.300	19,106
SUNCON	6.150	+0.260	62,833
BKAWAN	19.020	+0.200	68
GASMSIA	4.460	+0.140	22,304
CATL-C3	0.630	+0.135	1,434
SLVEST-WA	1.980	+0.120	1,561
CMSB	1.250	+0.100	146,962
F&N	28.380	+0.100	100
LFG	2.210	+0.100	61,055
PETRONM	3.950	+0.100	552
PETDAG	23.000	+0.100	1,726
GOLDETF	5.260	+0.100	2,397
MERCURY	0.795	+0.095	9
MITRA	0.665	+0.095	175,483
HI-CA	0.300	+0.090	4,350
LFG-WA	1.290	+0.090	5,682
PEKAT	1.860	+0.090	15,155

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
CMSB-C63	0.020	+100.00	4,400
FOCUS	0.010	+100.00	23,467
HONGSENG	0.010	+100.00	25,920
HSI-PWJS	0.010	+100.00	508
INGENIEU-WB	0.010	+100.00	7,341
TECHBASE-WB	0.010	+100.00	1,351
KPJ-C21	0.035	+75.00	620
CMSB-C65	0.080	+60.00	74,090
HI-CD	0.165	+57.14	18,936
AHB-WC	0.015	+50.00	24,930
CMSB-C66	0.045	+50.00	17,560
ECOHLDS	0.030	+50.00	3,998
MTRONIC	0.015	+50.00	822
HI-CA	0.300	+42.86	4,350
HSI-PWJU	0.195	+39.29	3,030
HSI-PWLA	0.055	+37.50	601
CMSB-C62	0.225	+36.36	1,350
CMSB-C68	0.060	+33.33	1,000
CMSB-C69	0.040	+33.33	10,888
CMSB-C71	0.080	+33.33	3,800

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	46,602.98	-91.99	-0.2
S&P 500 (US)	6,714.59	-25.69	-0.38
NASDAQ (US)	22,788.36	-153.31	-0.67
NYSE (US)	21,663.10	-101.9	-0.47
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	5,630.43	16.81	0.3
FTSE 100 (UK)	9,514.81	31.23	0.33
DAX (GER)	24,452.36	66.58	0.27
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	47,734.99	-215.89	-0.45
TOPIX INDEX (JPN)	3,235.66	7.75	0.24
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	26,829.46	-128.31	-0.48
CSI 300 (CHN)	4,640.69	20.64	0.45
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	225.17	-0.12	-0.05
SHANGHAI SE COM (CHN)	3,882.78	20.25	0.52
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	3,549.21	93.38	2.7
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	81,859.38	-67.37	-0.08
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,947.62	-9.19	-0.1
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	9,244.84	-8.79	-0.09
FBM KLCI	1,625.16	-4.87	-0.3
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	4,458.57	-13.69	-0.31
WTI (US$/BBL.)	62.32	0.59	0.94
BRENT (US$/BBL.)	66	0.55	0.84
GOLD (COMEX) (US$/T OZ)	4,060.20	55.8	1.39
SILVER (COMEX) (US$/T OZ)	48.55	1.03	2.24
PLATINUM (US$/T OZ)	1,646.31	18.24	1.12
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	511.65	1.9	0.37
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US$/MT)	10,761.00	106.5	1
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	419	-0.75	-0.18
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	504.5	-2.25	-0.44
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	1,021.75	-0.25	-0.02
COCOA (ICE) (US$/MT)	6,229.00	50	0.81
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	170.6	1.3	0.77

As at 6pm, Oct 8.

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
MPI	30.820	-0.660	2,501
HLBANK	20.500	-0.560	23,764
ALIBABA-C48	0.705	-0.285	10
HEIM	21.020	-0.280	1,603
FRONTKN-C47	0.085	-0.255	1,350
HLIND	14.020	-0.220	802
KSL	2.800	-0.160	45,197
NATGATE-CZ	0.030	-0.140	300
UNISEM	3.420	-0.140	13,636
HSI-CWKX	0.780	-0.110	41
DNEX-C44	0.045	-0.105	2,000
CITAGLB-WB	0.300	-0.100	25
HSI-CWKD	0.300	-0.100	335
IJM-C1P	0.050	-0.100	1,000
MSNIAGA	1.270	-0.100	10
SBAGAN	5.770	-0.100	231
YTLPOWR	4.110	-0.100	54,707
CATL-C1	0.575	-0.095	1,589
IHH	8.100	-0.090	249,551
KESM	3.680	-0.090	452

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
NATGATE-CZ	0.030	-82.35	300
FRONTKN-C47	0.085	-75.00	1,350
DNEX-C44	0.045	-70.00	2,000
IJM-C1P	0.050	-66.67	1,000
BNASTRA-CC	0.070	-53.33	1,160
ECOSHOP-CS	0.070	-53.33	1,000
99SMART-C17	0.075	-50.00	3,250
DPS-WC	0.010	-50.00	40
GAMUDA-C4C	0.075	-50.00	882
GENTINGC3M	0.005	-50.00	7,861
HSI-PWLU	0.005	-50.00	500
KGB-CZ	0.075	-50.00	1,240
TRIVE-WD	0.005	-50.00	973
TXCD-PA	0.010	-50.00	616
ZETRIX-C8N	0.005	-50.00	4,000
SDG-C34	0.080	-46.67	1,000
OCK-WB	0.035	-36.36	148,789
CWG-WA	0.020	-33.33	6,521
MSM-C5	0.010	-33.33	1,000
PARKWD-WA	0.030	-33.33	394

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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Govt saves RM20b in two years via fiscal consolidation

KUALA LUMPUR: The government's efforts to implement fiscal consolidation to reduce the deficit have succeeded in saving RM20 billion in borrowings over two years, said Deputy Finance Minister Lim Hui Ying.

The deputy finance minister said that fiscal consolidation has consistently lowered the deficit each year, from 6.4% in 2021 to 4.1% in 2024.

"The reduction in the deficit means borrowings fell from RM99.4 billion in 2022 to RM92.6 billion in 2023 and then to RM76.8 billion in 2024 – representing savings of more than RM20 billion over two years," she said when winding up the debate on the Auditor-General's Report 3/2025 for the Finance Ministry in Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

According to Lim, the government's borrowings have been prudent and targeted at strategic development sectors such as infrastructure, education, health and social protection, which can stimulate long-term growth and improve the welfare of citizens.

"In managing national debt, the government is bound by statutory borrowing limits. As of end-June 2025, the federal government's debt stands at RM1.3 trillion, which is still below the statutory debt ceiling.

"The government will continue to take appropriate measures to reduce the deficit and new borrowings including liabilities, as well as the country's dependence on debt," she added.

Meanwhile, Lim clarified that enforcement actions taken by the Inland Revenue Board against taxpayers are carried out under tax law provisions regardless of the taxpayer's status. – Bernama

Ringgit eases against dollar amid cautious trade

THE ringgit ended easier against the US dollar yesterday amid cautious sentiment in the currency market, said an analyst.

At 6pm, the local note was pegged at 4.2140/2195 versus the greenback, slightly lower than Tuesday's closing rate of 4.2125/2155.

"The US dollar/ringgit traded within a narrow range of RM4.21 to RM4.22 as traders and investors remained cautious on the state of the US economy with the government shutdown still in place," Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid told Bernama.

He noted that the tabling of Budget 2026 this Friday could, to some extent, determine the future trend.

"Should the government remain committed to maintaining fiscal discipline, it could lead to further appreciation of the ringgit. For now, there is a wait-and-see attitude amid the external uncertainties," he said.

At the close, the ringgit was higher against a basket of major currencies.

It appreciated versus the euro to 4.8941/9005 from 4.9135/9170 at Tuesday's close, strengthened vis-a-vis the Japanese yen to 2.7559/7596 from 2.7938/7960 on Tuesday, and rose against the British pound to 5.6501/6575 from 5.6620/6661 previously.

The ringgit was mostly firmer against Asean currencies.

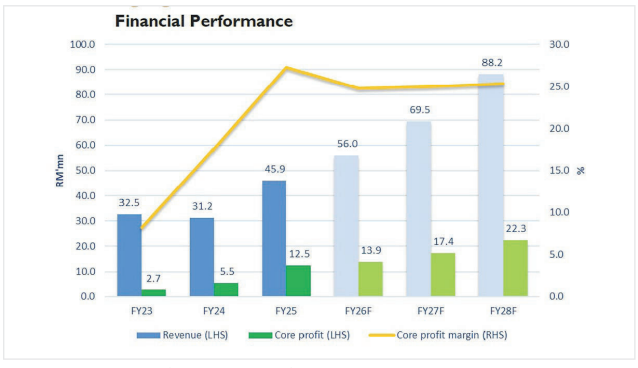
The local note advanced versus the Thai baht to 12.9506/9739 from 12.9532/9688 on Tuesday's close, gained against the Singapore dollar to 3.2503/2548 from 3.2587/2613 previously, and edged up vis-a-vis the Indonesian rupiah to 254.2/254.7 from 254.3/254.6.

Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.2910	4.1450	4.1350
1 Australian Dollar	2.8320	2.7170	2.7010
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3100	3.2080	3.2000
1 Canadian Dollar	3.0670	2.9810	2.9690
1 Euro	4.9940	4.8330	4.8130
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.4900	2.3980	2.3820
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3100	3.2080	3.2000
1 Sterling Pound	5.7520	5.5690	5.5490
1 Swiss Franc	5.3960	5.1650	5.1500
100 UAE Dirham	117.9600	111.8300	111.6300
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.5900	3.3430	3.1430
100 Chinese Renminbi	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Danish Krone	68.5700	63.1000	62.9000
100 Hongkong Dollar	55.6000	52.8300	52.6300
100 Indian Rupee	4.9000	4.6000	4.4000
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0268	0.0242	0.0192
100 Japanese Yen	2.8220	2.7200	2.7100
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	44.0800	40.5400	40.3400
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.5400	1.4400	1.2400
100 Philippine Peso	7.4800	7.0400	6.8400
100 Qatar Riyal	118.7700	112.7600	112.5600
100 Saudi Riyal	115.4100	109.5600	109.3600
100 South Africa Rand	25.7500	23.2600	23.0600
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.4500	1.3400	1.1400
100 Swedish Krona	46.9300	42.7400	42.5400
100 Thai Baht	13.7700	12.2100	11.8100

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

THMY Holdings Bhd
Not Rated



Source: TA Research, Company data

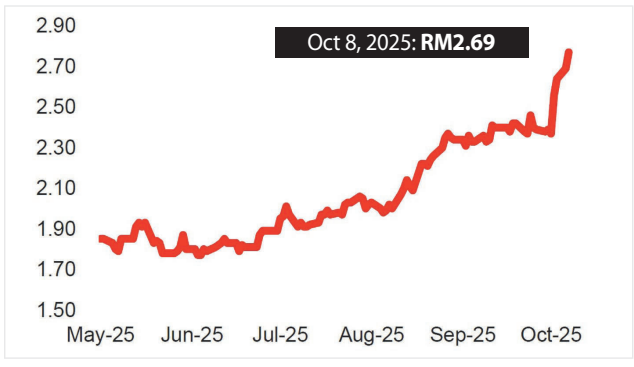
THMY provides automated test solutions for the electrical and electronics industry. Through its subsidiary, it designs and develops software, fabricate s hardware, assembles and installs customised ICT and FCT systems and fixtures. The group also offers industrial automation as well as maintenance and repair services for its products. Its customer base mainly consists of multinational original equipment manufacturers and electronic manufacturing service providers across the Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific. The group is located in Batu Kawan, Penang, with a production area of 25,517 sq ft.

With 17 years of experience, THMY has built a strong track record in the automated test solutions industry, expanding from in-house ICT software development to providing complete automated and industrial automation solutions. Meanwhile, continuous investments in advanced tester platforms and CNC machinery have further enhanced the group's capabilities, supporting steady growth across both domestic and international markets.

The group plans to build a new 3-storey office building with factory and warehouse near its Batu Kawan facility to expand capacity and serve new customers in the technology, media and telecommunications industry. The 88,000 sq ft facility will house 20 FCT assembly workstations to support high volume orders, with operations targeted to begin in Q2'29.

The group also plans to enhance its solutions by strengthening design and development, and research and development capabilities through investments in advanced equipment such as robotic systems, wireless PCBs, and testing tools, while expanding its engineering team to drive continuous innovation in customised automated and industrial automation solutions. – ***TA Research, Oct 8***

Mi Technovation Bhd
Outperform. Target price: RM3.50



Source: PublicInvest Research

BACKED by the 126 patents (+76 pending), Mi's flagship MI series die sorters use a proprietary horizontal turret system patent that makes it difficult for competitors to replicate. Its ability to have direct engagement and qualification by the end customers, coupled with the industry-leading 50k UPH throughput and higher yield rates, position them to hold more than 70% of the market share in the die sorters space among tier-1 OSATs. Meanwhile, management expects a superb cycle underway for the advanced packaging trend in 2026-2027, driven by the increasing AI applications, High Bandwidth Memory and High Performance Computing.

The Accurus Taiwan, which contributes about 80% of the SMBU, is fully utilised with a total of 20 production lines running. Meanwhile, the Ningbo plant in China has already installed 6 production lines, running at a capacity utilisation of 50%. Management targets to turn around Accurus China by the end of the year and should see positive earnings contribution in 2026. Meanwhile, the 3rd solder ball production plant, which will be set up in Senai, Johor, will have a planned capacity of 10 production lines or 50% of the Taiwan operation. It is slated for mass production by 1H'27.

Management anticipates its first commercialisation by 2026, potentially a key growth driver in 2027-28. The unit will bundle the power module, driver card and thermal management capabilities under a single solution offered to commercial vehicle players outside of China. A new business unit, spun off from the SSBU, is slated for launch by 2028.

Outperform with RM3.50 TP. – ***PublicInvest Research, Oct 8***

Binastra Corporation Bhd
Buy. Target price: RM2.69



Source: Bloomberg

BINASTRA Corporation via its wholly owned subsidiary Binastra Green Energy (BGE) clinched a RM305 million contract from Bahru Stainless. The contract of nine months covers EPCC works (covering the design and construction) related to the development of a 65MWp solar photovoltaic (PV) system (comprising 15MWp of rooftop and 50MWp of ground-mounted installations), alongside a 200MWh battery energy storage system (BESS) at Bahru Stainless' production plant in Pasir Gudang, Johor.

This is billion ASTRA's first job in the renewable energy (RE) space, with the net margin likely being 7-8%, in our view. Also, the value of the solar PV EPCC services industry in Malaysia stood at RM0.7 billion in 2024 and it is forecasted to increase to RM1.3 billion in 2027 according to Providence Strategic Partners. Furthermore, the National Energy Transition Roadmap outlines strategies for integrating BESS into the national grid to support RE adoption and energy stability.

Taking into account the latest new job win, BNASTRA has clinched RM1.9 billion worth of new jobs for YTD-FY26 vs our internal job win target of RM4 billion while we project the outstanding orderbook to be at RM4.8 billion. We expect the remaining RM2.1 billion of our RM4 billion new job win target for FY26 to mainly come from Johor with the group clinching RM629 million worth of jobs to date across four contracts in Johor Bahru.

Looking ahead, BNASTRA may stand a chance to clinch the main building works for EXSIM Development's Causewayz Square with a projected GDV of RM3.5 billion which could be RM1.3-1.4 billion (assuming that construction cost is 40% of GDV) should it deliver the recent RM132 million piling job well for the same development awarded in August.

Buy with RM2.69 TP. – ***RHB Research, Oct 8***

SCAN ME

theSun LYFE

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Six refrigerator myths debunked

Essential tips for smarter use



A refrigerator is a long-term appliance that enhances a person's home and daily life.

WE all use our refrigerators every single day, but how much do we really know about them?

For most of us, it is a simple routine. We open the door, grab what we need and close it. But what if the way we have been taught to use our fridges is based on a series of common myths?

From where we store leftovers to how we pack the fresh food, these are the truths we have been missing. We are here to debunk some of the biggest refrigeration myths and give you the essential tips.

Myth 1: Load the fridge wherever it fits

Most people just place food wherever it fits. However, different areas of the fridge have different temperatures.

- Bottom shelf

This is the coldest part of the fridge. It is the best place for raw meat, poultry and seafood. This prevents any raw juices from dripping onto cooked food and causing cross-contamination.

- Middle shelves

Ideal for dairy products, eggs and leftovers.

- Top shelf

Use this for ready-to-eat foods such as deli meats, yogurts and pre-prepared dishes

- Crisper drawers

Designed to manage humidity. Use a crisper with humidity control to keep fruits and vegetables fresh for longer.

Myth 2: The colder the better

Setting your fridge to the lowest temperature is not always the best. A temperature that is too low can freeze fresh produce and dairy, ruining their texture and taste. The ideal temperature is between one and four degrees. Modern refrigerators maintain this temperature with greater precision.

Myth 3: Ditch the baking soda

An old box of baking soda is a common "fix" for bad odours. While it helps a little, it is not the most effective solution. The real source of odours is often bacteria. A more effective solution is a fridge with active deodorisation and sterilisation technology. Look for a fridge that offers this advanced technology.

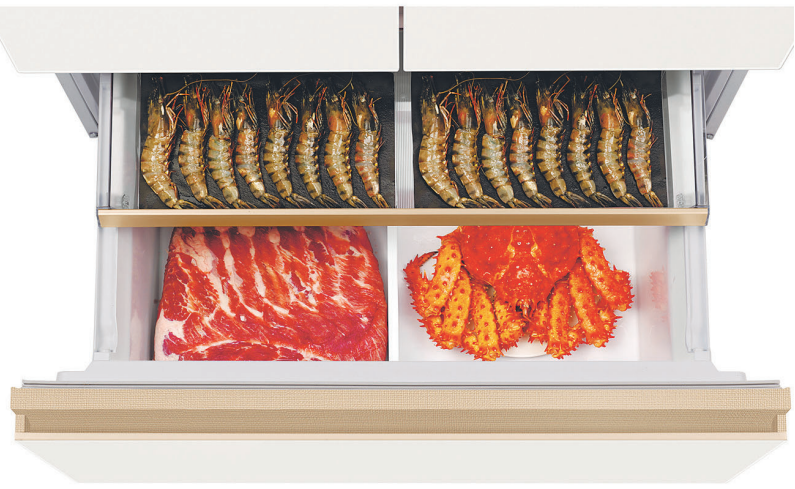
Myth 4: A fridge is just to keep food, nothing further

A refrigerator is one of the most significant investments you will make for your kitchen, and choosing the right one goes far beyond just keeping food cold. It is about investing in a long-term appliance that enhances your home and daily life.

- Size and space integration – will the fridge fit perfectly in your kitchen? It goes beyond just width.
- Advance technology – does the fridge help to manage humidity, actively deodorise and kill bacteria?
- Energy efficiency – will the fridge affect your electricity bill?
- Durability and build quality – beyond the flashy features, is the fridge reliable enough to last many years?

Myth 5: It is okay to store your canned food in the fridge after opening

While it seems logical, it is actually not a good idea. Cans are made of sheet metal that can rust once exposed to oxygen. This rust can contaminate the food inside, especially with acidic items such as tomato sauce. Always transfer any leftover canned food into an airtight, food-safe container (like glass or plastic) before placing it in the refrigerator. This simple step keeps your food safe and fresh.



The bottom part of the fridge is the best place for raw meat, poultry and seafood.

Myth 6: Wrapping vegetables in newspaper keeps them fresh

Many people believe wrapping vegetables in newspaper is a good way to keep them fresh. However, the printing ink can contain harmful chemicals that may transfer to your food. Modern refrigerators with humidity-controlled crispers are a much safer and more effective way to preserve produce.

__This__ article is contributed by Haier Malaysia.

More affluent Malaysians taking mini retirements: Survey

MINI retirements are emerging as a new trend among affluent Malaysians, with one in two (50%) intending to take a mini retirement with a preferred length of one to two years, according to HSBC's Quality of Life: Affluent Investor Snapshot.

Affluent individuals are defined as those having investable assets of between US$100,000 (RM420,800) to US$2 million (RM8.42 million).

The survey also found that more than half or 53% of affluent Malaysians that are intending to take a mini retirement, want to take two to three mini retirements in their lifetime, and the ideal age that they would like to start taking mini retirements is at 46. They also ideally want to take a mini retirement once in every seven years throughout their working career.

A mini retirement is defined as a career break lasting from a few months to a few years, taken to travel, spend quality time with family, pursue hobbies or develop new skills. It is an intentional pause that differs from a sabbatical, as it typically lasts longer (between six to 12 months on average) and can lead to significant life changes such as a new career path.

In Malaysia, 77% of the affluent individuals surveyed feel that taking a mini retirement improves their quality of life. Their top three motivations for taking a mini retirement are to spend quality time with family (40%), focus on individual well-being (36%) and to travel and explore without constraints (29%).

"Mini retirements may be a relatively new concept in Malaysia, but it is one that is becoming more prevalent as the perception of wealth is changing. Affluent individuals no longer define success by how much of wealth they have accumulated, but by having the time and ability to live the life they truly want, and to live their wealth. What makes a mini retirement or multiple mini retirements feasible for the affluent is tailored financial planning," said HSBC Malaysia International Wealth and Premier Banking country head Linda Yip.

As for the top three challenges to taking a mini retirement, affluent Malaysians cited financial security concerns (42%), family obligations and responsibilities (33%) and the fear of negative consequences on their career (31%). However, 71% say they are confident in their financial planning for their mini retirement with personal savings (55%), dividends, interest income and other capital gains (52%) as well as rental income from properties (36%) cited as the top three income sources.

The average intended spend for mini retirement is US$309,000, which is slightly lower than the global average of US$339,800, but higher than other markets such as Australia (US$299,000) and Taiwan (US$233,000).

Interestingly, the ratio for mini retirement spending over savings needed for traditional retirement for Malaysia is at 31%, indicating that affluent Malaysians are only utilising slightly more than a third of their total retirement savings to indulge in a mini retirement.

This is relatively lower than other markets surveyed such as India (93%), Indonesia (52%), the United Arab Emirates (37%) and mainland China (34%).

Other key findings of the survey:

- 61% of affluent Malaysians intend to take a mini retirement in their home market (Malaysia).
- The top three destinations chosen by affluent Malaysians to take their mini retirement are Singapore (31%), Japan (25%) and Australia (21%).

SMART LIVING

Samsung Bespoke AI WindFree Air Conditioner
Rather than hitting you with a harsh burst of cold, this air conditioner circulates air evenly and gently, recreating the comfort of a natural breeze. With its WindFree Cooling mode, the cool breeze is released evenly through the 23,000 micro air holes, wrapping the room in a soft, consistent comfort. Whether a mum is trying to put a toddler down for an afternoon nap or you are curled up on the sofa for a quiet evening, WindFree Cooling mode is able to adapt to your needs.



Ugreen MagFlow Magnetic Power Bank 10,000mAh 25W
Price: RM209
This wireless charger is capable of powering an iPhone 16 Pro Max to 50% in 30 minutes. It features a built-in USB-C cable that supports 30W two-way fast charging and doubles as a carry strap, while Ugreen's SmartCharge enables simultaneous charging of three devices. With strong magnetic hold, real-time battery display and 13-layer safety protection, including temperature control, it offers compact, all-day power in a travel-ready design.



Mr Muscle Aroma Clean
Mr Muscle Malaysia has unveiled new packaging for its Aroma Clean lineup of bathroom cleaning products. Aroma Clean is all about transforming everyday cleaning into a sensorial experience. Each variant is packed with deep cleaning power and uplifting fragrance because cleaning should smell as good as it works. There are four fragrance variants: Lavender Myst, Sparkly Lemon, Botanical Freshness and Ocean Escape.







Canon Pixma TR160
Price: RM1,590
This portable wireless printer is designed to keep up with the fast-paced lifestyle of professionals, entrepreneurs and freelancers on the go. Whether it is producing a last-minute client proposal in a cafe, printing invoices while travelling, or preparing polished documents at co-working spaces, the Pixma TR160 is built to deliver professional-quality output wherever work takes you. It weighs just under 2kg and is sized to slip easily into a briefcase or carry-on.

Toshiba TV Z770R
Price: RM7,299–RM12,999
Featuring exceptional mini LED technology, the Z770R delivers stunning contrast and vivid colour expression that brings every scene to life. At the core of its intelligent operation is the Regza Intelligence, comprising Regza Picture, Sound, Pilot and Gen AI, which optimises picture and audio performance in real time to match content and environment. A refresh rate up to 165Hz ensures ultra-smooth motion, making it ideal for high-speed gaming and fast-paced sports.



Kobo Clara Colour (white)
Price: RM799
The digital reading device is now available in white, adding a minimalist, timeless option to the Kobo Clara Colour lineup. From richly illustrated graphic novels to colour-coded highlights, the Clara Colour brings a new dimension to the e-book experience. Through Kobo's built-in e-bookstore with over eight million titles, seamless library integration via Libby, friction-free Instapaper service for web articles and the all-you-can-read Kobo Plus subscription, the reading opportunities are limitless.



LG DualCool AI Air
The LG DualCool AI Air introduces cutting-edge artificial intelligence to residential air conditioning. This innovative system delivers intelligent cooling solutions which are well-accommodated for Malaysia's tropical climate and energy-conscious consumers. It features innovative functions such as AI Soft Air Mode, Dual Vane system and AirCare Complete System – delivering smarter cooling, healthier air and energy-efficient comfort.



Haier Space Fit Refrigerator
Price: From RM6,999
Haier's new Space Fit refrigerator delivers on a key consumer trend of Malaysians desiring a clutter-free home, blending a seamless design with top-tier functionality and innovations such as dedicated food zones, advanced freshness and hygiene features and effortless convenience. Haier's groundbreaking 0cm installation gap, bottom-front heat release and 108° dual-axis hinge are engineered to perfectly integrate with cabinetry, maximising kitchen space while creating a sophisticated, built-in aesthetic.

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Syafiq Yusof movies dominate FFM34



Blood Brothers: Bara Naga has grossed over RM70 million. – ***PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @PRIMEWORKSSTUDIOS.FILM***

Blood Brothers, *Soloz* among top five nominees for Best Film

TWO films directed by Syafiq Yusof, *Blood Brothers: Bara Naga* and *Soloz: Game Of Life*, stole the spotlight as both were listed among the top five nominees for Best Film at the 34th Malaysia Film Festival (FFM34).

Blood Brothers: Bara Naga, co-directed by Abhilash Chandra, received 13 nominations across 11 of the 25 contested categories, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor, Best Stunt Action and Best Screenplay.

The film, produced by Skop Productions and Primeworks Studios, which grossed over RM70 million, was also nominated for Best Cinematography, Best Sound Design, Best Art Direction, Best Theme Song and Best Costume Design.

Interestingly, three actors from the film – Shukri Yahaya, Syazwan Zulkifli, and Syafiq Kyle – were all nominated in the Best Supporting Actor category, while Sharnaaz Ahmad was nominated for Best Actor.

Meanwhile, *Soloz: Game Of Life* earned 11 nominations in 11 categories, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Supporting Actress, Most Promising Actor and Best Original Story.

The film, inspired by the life of renowned Malaysian e-sports player Muhammad Faris Zakaria, was also nominated for Best Screenplay, Best Editing, Best Sound Design, Best Visual Effects, Best Original Score and Best Theme Song.

Other nominees for Best Film include *Takluk: Lahad Datu*, *Reversi*, and *Babah*.

In the Best Short Film category, the five nominees are *Jerat*, *Rhythm of Rainforest*, *Syurga Itu Mahal*, *Saranghae* and *Tunggu Abah*.

For Best Documentary, the contenders are *Jusit Rantai*, *Nadi Peralihan Tenaga*, *The Tides Will Decide*, *Rindu Tak Berpenghujung*, and *Derita Zara*.

The Best Actress category is expected to be highly competitive, with *Telaga Suriram* co-stars Nabila Huda and Maya Karin vying against each other, alongside Sofia Jane (*Mencari Ramlee*), Khatijah Tan (*Jangan Pandang Belakang... Aku Tahu Asal Usulmu*) and Sweet Qismina, who delivered a strong performance in *Babah*.

Amir Ahnaf and Fadhli Masoot from *Kahar Kapla High Council* will compete with Hun Haqeem (*Soloz: Game Of Life*), Vijay Ganesh (*Mirugasirisham*) and Koh Teng Huat for the Most Promising Actor award.

The announcement was made during the FFM34 Top Five Launch and opening ceremony last night, officiated by Deputy Communications Minister Teo Nie Ching.

Organised by the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (Finas) with the support of the ministry, FFM34 – themed *Karya Kreatif, Sinema Dinamik* (Creative Works, Dynamic Cinema) – received 41 feature film entries, 26 short films, and 23 documentaries during the submission period from July 8 to 25.

As part of the government's continued support for local filmmakers, the winner of the Best Film category will receive RM1 million in funding through the Creative Content Fund.

Winners in 27 categories will each receive RM5,000 and a trophy, while recipients of Special Awards will receive RM10,000 and a trophy.

Additionally, RM20,000 worth of Finas facilities and equipment rental will be awarded across seven categories – Best New Director, Best Cinematography, Best Sound Design, Best Director, Best Documentary, Best Film and Best Short Film.

To honour veteran artistes who have shaped Malaysia's cinematic journey, Finas will also hold a tribute programme to recognise four film industry icons – Datin Rusnani Jamil, Ruminah Sidek, Datuk Rahim Razali and Othman Hafsham.

The FFM34 Awards Night will take place on Nov 1 at the Seri Angkasa Auditorium, Angkasapuri.

The event will be broadcast live on RTM's TV2 and Finas's YouTube channel. – Bernama

Aiffa 2025 draws over 200 entries, reflects growth of Asean film industry

MORE than 200 submissions have been received for the Asean International Film Festival and Awards (Aiffa) 2025 – an increase from 170 entries in the festival's previous edition.

Aiffa director Livan Tajang said the rise in participation for this year's event, to be held in Kuching, Sarawak, from Nov 12 to 15, reflects the growing recognition among regional filmmakers of the festival's role as a platform to recognise outstanding cinematic works from Southeast Asia.

She said the four-day festival is open to films produced between 2023 and 2024.

"The criteria for Aiffa are not complicated, as long as the films were produced between 2023 and 2024. This is in line with the festival's schedule as it is organised every two years," she said after the Aiffa 2025 Kuala Lumpur launch recently.

A total of 13 awards will be presented in this seventh edition, including the Asean Inspiration, Asean Spirit and Best Director awards.

This year's edition introduces a fresh Aiffa identity through two new award initiatives – Asean Unifest and Borneo Documentary.

"Asean Unifest is a short film category open to university students. Its theme focuses on the sustainable development goals and full details are available on the Asean Film Festival website.



Abdul Karim (third from right) at the Aiffa 2025 Kuala Lumpur launching ceremony recently. With him are Hans (third from left), Livan (second from right) and Azmir Saifuddin (right). – ***BERNAMAPIC***

"The second new category is Borneo Documentary, which features three awards – the Aiffa 2025 Best Borneo Feature Documentary Award, Aiffa 2025 Best East Malaysia Short Documentary Award and Special Merit Award," she said.

Livan said the Borneo Documentary category aims to encourage more producers to come to Borneo to film documentaries.

The screening and main awards ceremony will take place at the Borneo Cultures Museum auditorium on Nov 14.

Present at the launch were Sarawak Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts Minister Datuk Seri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (Finas) chairman Datuk Hans Isaac and Finas CEO Datuk Azmir Saifuddin Mutalib. – Bernama

SM Universe K-pop star search set to ignite KL in December

DREAMING of becoming the next K-pop star? After the success of its Jakarta debut earlier this year, SM Universe K-Pop Rising Star Search competition is making its way to Malaysia in December. This time, it will be held at the Damansara Performing Arts Centre (DPAC).

K-pop training academy SM Universe (Singapore) has been providing authentic K-pop trainee-style training – from vocals, dance, music production, to stage performance. With the growing wave of young talents across the region, the Malaysian edition, focusing on young dance talents, promises to be an even more exciting platform to spotlight aspiring K-pop stars.

Registration fees for the Malaysian edition are RM150 (until Oct 31: early bird) and RM200 (Nov 1–20: standard), and participants need to submit a 60-second solo K-pop dance cover video.

Finalist announcement is on Dec 5, while semi-finals is on Dec 20 at DPAC. Finals is on Dec 21.

The competition is open to anyone across Malaysia aged eight to 18. If you are passionate about dancing, this is your chance to step into the spotlight.

The winners will earn an exclusive one-week training scholarship at SM Universe (Singapore) worth up to S$1,500 (RM4,890), training directly with SM Universe expert trainers from South Korea. This is not just a training scholarship, it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take your first real step into the K-pop industry.

So, if you believe you have the talent, passion and dedication to become Malaysia's next K-pop rising star, now is your chance to shine!



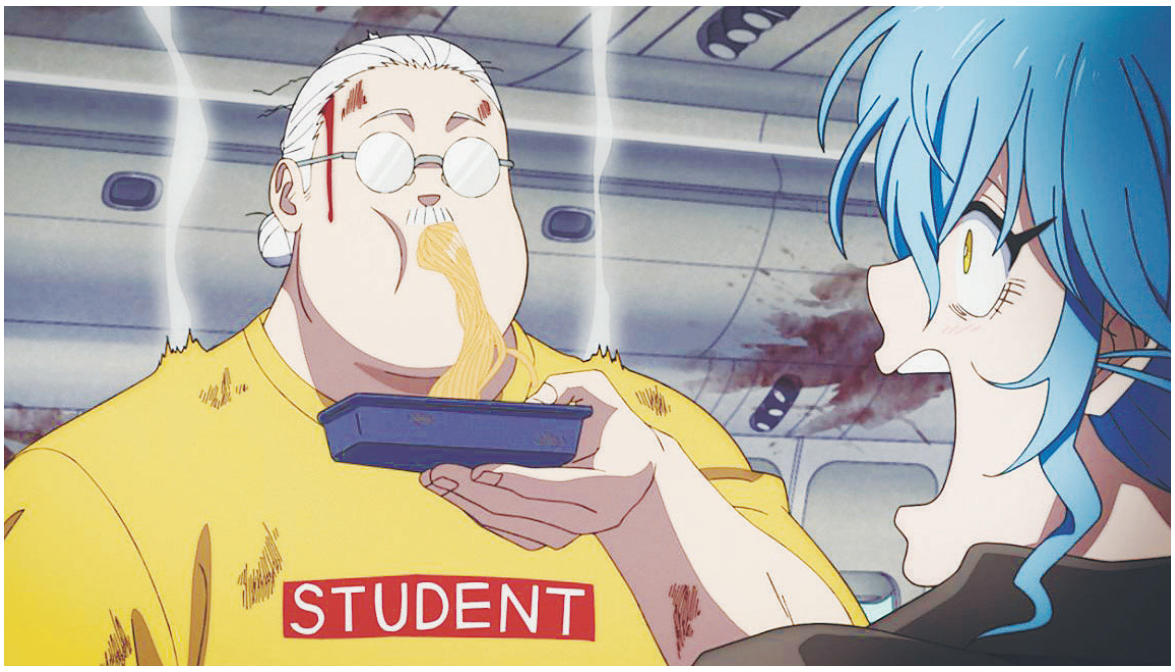
The SM Universe K-pop Rising Star Search contest will bring K-pop dance talents in Malaysia onto the big stage, with winners receiving a training scholarship worth up to RM4,890.

Sakamoto Days goes off rails

TV SHOW REVIEW

Second cour swaps realism for absurdity, humour, wild assassin action

BY **MARK MATHEN VICTOR**



The aeroplane episodes impressively ramp up the unhinged mix of action and humour.

AS restrained as the first cour of *Sakamoto Days* was in terms of how far it bent the laws of realism and physics, the recently concluded second cour completely drops its mask of semi-believability and embraces the chaos of imagination, absurdity and creativity.

The new cour continues developing villain Slur's efforts to destroy the Japan Assassins Association (JAA), picking up from the previous cour involving his hired serial killers that were sent to assassinate the members of the Order, the JAA's elite group of assassins.

Straying from that objective, the serial killer Saw instead goes after Sakamoto. While the group causes chaos around Tokyo as a diversion, Slur and his henchman Gaku launch a direct attack on a JAA branch.

The cour leads into Sakamoto and Shin joining a dangerous student transfer exam by the Japan Clear Creation (JCC), a prestigious assassin academy, before culminating in them infiltrating the JCC's campus in order to get information on Slur.

Like *theSun* covered in its review of the first cour, the strengths of the series are amplified in the second cour, which pushes the limit in humour and giddy fun.

It helps that *Sakamoto Days* does not take itself very seriously. The series sticks to its guns by delivering creative fight sequences that mix over the top violence and funny gags equally through its colourful cast of characters.

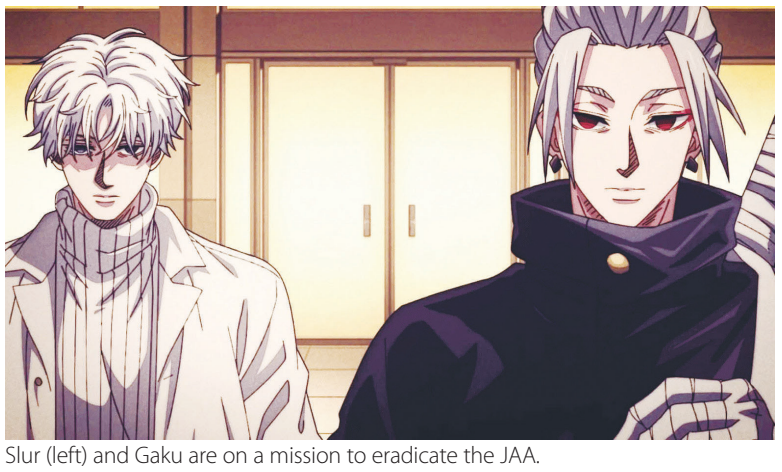
For instance, there are two episodes that take place entirely in an aeroplane. Halfway into the cour, as Sakamoto and Shin are on a flight to the location of the JCC entrance exam, JCC staff appear and tell the flight passengers that the exam is actually on the plane, with the scene cutting to outside the plane, where the word "kill" is seen as the plane's livery.

What ensues is an all-out battle between the passengers who are tasked with retrieving the bullets being held by the JCC staff in order to pass the first phase of the exam. This episode also introduces several new characters that add a different dynamic to the existing cast.

It is refreshing how Yoto Suzuki's manga that the anime is adapted from does not overcomplicate its world by giving names, concepts, etc to the feats being displayed by characters of *Sakamoto Days*.

Unlike *Jujutsu Kaizen* or *Demon Slayer*, there is no need to understand or go on a deep Google dive into why characters like the Order's Takamura, a frail, barely mobile old man, is able to slice entire buildings in half with his sword.

As both cours form the first season and ends with Sakamoto's infiltration of the JCC involving crossdressing, it will be interesting to see how much wilder *Sakamoto Days* will become with its second season, which as now, has not been confirmed.


Slur (left) and Gaku are on a mission to eradicate the JAA.


New characters join Sakamoto (centre) and Shin (in Sakamoto's arm) by the end of the cour. – ***PICS FROM NETFLIX***

Gen Z protesters worldwide rally to *One Piece* pirate flag

WITH a yellow straw hat and a wicked toothy grin, he bobs among crowds of protesting youngsters from Asia to Africa to Latin America and Europe – a smirking reproach to governments everywhere.

Born in the cult manga series *One Piece*, the cartoon skull and crossbones has in recent weeks become the flag of anti-establishment demonstrations worldwide.

An emblem of the hero Luffy – fighter of cruel powers, liberator of the oppressed – in the best-selling comic books dating to 1997, the stylised pirate flag is a rallying sign for Gen Z, the generation of 20-somethings who have come of age since.

"I grew up with *One Piece*, like the vast majority of Gen Z, so it has become a symbol for us," said Kai, a 26-year-old protester who joined recent youth demos in Madagascar.

For Kai – who identified himself by a pseudonym – the series carries a clear message of struggle against "oppressive governments".

The Luffy flag was first sighted flying over the heads of young demonstrators during recent rallies in Indonesia, where the government threatened to ban it.

It has since been seen at protests in countries, including Nepal, the Philippines, France and Peru.

In Madagascar, the Indian Ocean island struck by protests this week against power and water failures, the flag was promoted by organisers via the Instagram account "Gen Z Madagascar".

Fighting 'World Government'

In Japanese artist Eiichiro Oda's cult series – some 100 books and counting – Monkey D. Luffy sails the seas striving to become the Pirate King.

His is a "universal" epic quest, according to Phedra Derycke, author of the book *One Piece: Lessons of Power*.

"It is a series that has lasted for more than 20 years, sold hundreds of millions of copies worldwide and conveys ideals of dreams and freedom," he said.

Stopping on various islands – inspired by real countries, including Egypt, Spain and Japan – he fights to end the oppressive reign of the World Government. The books also carry an ecological message.

"Behind the pirate adventure accessible to everyone, Oda develops many political themes: a ruling caste that exploits the people, slavery, discrimination, racism," said Derycke – who perceived echoes of scenes from *One Piece* in the recent youth rallies.

As for the cartoon death's head, he added, it is a suitably "depoliticised" symbol, adaptable to protests in a variety of settings.

Online manga unifier

It popped up during recent protests in France, a fresh face among the familiar banners of labour unions.

A protester carrying the Luffy banner in the southern city of Lyon, 45-year-old teacher Julien Dubon, said he was sharing what "the youth of Asia... started".

"It will reach many more people than those (union) flags you see behind me. Those will speak to certain (older) generations and perhaps less to others," he said.

Anthropologist Elisabeth Soulie, author of a book about Generation Z, saw the Luffy flag as an "emotional" emblem and a "unifier" of young people who typically mobilise collectively online, without clear leadership.

From its Asian origins, the flag was recently sighted in Peru. Through social networks, said manga specialist Derycke, Luffy's pirate flag could "get even bigger around the world". – AFP



Luffy, the main protagonist of the adventure manga and anime series *One Piece*. – ***PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @ONEPIECE_STAFF***



Vampires, werewolves make comeback

Bollywood horror goes mainstream

LONG written off as fringe, horror is back in India's Bollywood, reinvented with comedy, mythology and big stars powering a box-office renaissance.

"There are new stories, fresh talent and all of this is leading to a resurgence," said director Deepak Ramsay of the renowned filmmaking family, which has created around 30 horror titles over the decades.

"Films that were once niche are turning out to be blockbusters."

Once dismissed as pulp, bigger budgets, sophisticated special effects and A-list casts are pulling Bollywood horror out of the shadows.

"There is a huge audience wanting to watch such movies," said director Aditya Sarpotdar, whose film *Thamma* – touted as India's first vampire movie – releases this month.

Billed as a "bloody love story", it stars popular actors Ayushmann Khurrana and Rashmika Mandanna, and blends Bollywood's signature song-and-dance numbers with werewolves and sharp fangs.

Deepak credits some the genre's new-found success to prosthetics and computer-generated effects that have "gone to the next level", noting that budgets have also shot up.

From as little as US$25,000 (RM106,000) to make a horror film, "now budgets are closer to US$9 million", he said.

Bollywood's horror history runs deep.

The 1949 black-and-white hit *Mahal* is widely regarded as the first Hindi horror film, when Kamal Amrohi's supernatural tale of a reincarnated lover introduced a striking aesthetic.

'Get scared'

The Ramsay Brothers pushed the genre forward in the 1970s and 1980s, with low-budget "creature" features in the style of Britain's *Hammer House of Horror*.

But despite occasional standouts, horror became associated with shoestring budgets, cheap effects and lesser-known actors.

"None of the big stars would be interested because the budgets were small," Deepak said.

And with horror films often restricted to adult viewers, "almost 50 per cent of the audience would be cut off", he added.

Even so, the Ramsays had a winning formula: Blood and sex pulled in crowds with lurid gore and scantily clad women.

A slow shift began in the 2000s, with Ajay Devgn starring in the 2003 success *Bhoot* (Ghost), while Akshay Kumar led cult hit *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* in 2007, a landmark that mixed psychological thriller and comedy.

The broader popular rise began in 2018 with *Tumbbad* – the first Indian film to open Venice Critics' Week – and *Stree*, which drew on folklore and mythology to captivate audiences.

Today's filmmakers are increasingly blending genres.

"There's a very thin line between horror and comedy. The moment you get scared, your first reaction after the shock is to laugh," Ram Gopal Varma, who directed *Bhoot*, said.

Biggest star

Aditya said the lighter approach broadened the appeal.

"When catering to mass audiences, humour becomes key," he said.

His 2024 hit *Munjya*, a 12A-rated tale of a vengeful spirit who wants to get married, turned into a family outing.

"Children pulled their parents to theatres," he said.

Despite recent success, Aditya believes Indian cinema has yet to give the genre its full due.

"We always looked at horror as pulpy," he said.

He now has his eye on the ultimate prize: Bollywood's biggest star.

"I would love to see Shah Rukh Khan attempt horror. If these films are fun and entertaining, why not?" said the director. – AFP



Kajol at the trailer launch of her Indian Hindi-language mythological horror film *Maa* in Mumbai. – ***PICS FROM AFP***



Bollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor (second from right) attends the launch of the comedy horror film *Stree 2*'s first song in Mumbai.



Actress Radhika Apte poses during an event for the promotion of her Netflix Indian horror series *Ghoul* in Mumbai.

Taylor Swift rules box office with *Showgirl* event

TAYLOR SWIFT is having a very good weekend: after the blockbuster release of her new album *The Life of a Showgirl*, she triumphed at the North American box office with her special movie theatre event.

The Official Release Party of a Showgirl raked in an estimated US$33 million (RM140 million) in the Friday to Sunday period in the US and Canada, Exhibitor Relations said.

The three-day-only event – which featured the debut of her first music video from the album, behind-the-scenes footage and lyric videos – also was screened in cities around the world, but international totals were not immediately available.

"No other musical artiste on the planet can do this," said analyst David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research, noting that *Release Party* was only announced on Sept 19.

"The picture would double its box office from here if it continued to play in theatres, but this is it – it's finished now."

In a distant second place with US$11.1 million in ticket sales was Paul Thomas Anderson's action thriller *One Battle After Another*, in its second weekend out, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Sean Penn, who are both already earning Oscars buzz.

DiCaprio stars as a washed-up far-left revolutionary who is dragged back into action to help his daughter, while Penn plays his ruthless military nemesis.

The film, loosely based on Thomas Pynchon's novel *Vineland*, also stars Benicio del Toro, Teyana Taylor and Regina Hall.

The Smashing Machine – the true story of mixed martial arts fighter Mark Kerr, played by a transformed Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson – debuted in third place with a disappointing US$6 million.

"Johnson and Emily Blunt are strong leads who have elevated bigger pictures. It's not happening here," said Gross.

Gabby's Dollhouse: The Movie, a live-action/animation hybrid based on a popular Netflix children's series, came in fourth with US$5.2 million in its second week.

And in fifth place was horror franchise film *The Conjuring: Last Rites*, which earned US$4 million. Overall, it has grossed US$167.8 million in the US and Canada. – AFP

OTHER TOP-RAKING FILMS:

Demon Slayer: Infinity Castle (US$3.5 million)

***Avatar: The Way of Water* - 3D reissue** (US$3.2 million)

The Strangers: Chapter 2 (US$2.8 million)

Good Boy (US$2.3 million)

Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1 (US$1.8 million)

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DALAM MAHKAMAH MAJISTRET DI KUALA SELANGOR
DALAM NEGERI SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN, MALAYSIA
GUAMAN SIVIL NO.:
BJ-A72NCVC-55-07/2025

ANTARA

TENAGA NASIONAL BERHAD
[No. Syarikat : 199001009294 (200866-W)]
...PLAINTIF

DAN

SUBRAMANIAM A/P PETHAN
[NO. K. P.:771210-14-5255]
...DEFENDAN

NOTIS PENYAMPAIAN GANTI-BENTUK IKLAN

Kepada,

SUBRAMANIAM A/P PETHAN
67A, Jalan Ijok, Kampung KTM Lama,
45600 Bestari Jaya,
Selangor Darul Ehsan.

Dan/atau

SUBRAMANIAM A/P PETHAN
B-8-124, Apartment Subang Suria,
Seksyen U5,
40150 Shah Alam,
Selangor Darul Ehsan.

Dalam perkara Writ yang dikeluarkan pada 8 Julai 2025.

AMBIL PERHATIAN bahawa suatu tindakan Writ telah dikeluarkan terhadap Defendan dalam Mahkamah Majistret di Kuala Selangor dalam Guaman No. BJ-A72NCVC-55-07/2025 oleh Tenaga Nasional Berhad [No. Syarikat: 199001009294] (200866-W)] di mana tuntutan Plaintif ialah untuk bayaran bagi jumlah tunggakan bil elektrik bulanan yang dikeluarkan oleh Plaintif kepada Defendan sebanyak RM19,384.65 setakat bil bertarikh 16/10/2022 untuk Nombor Akaun Pengguna 220258773108, faedah atas jumlah penghakiman pada kadar 5% setahun dari tarikh pemfailan tindakan ini sehingga tarikh penghakiman, faedah atas jumlah penghakiman pada kadar 5% setahun dari tarikh penghakiman sehingga tarikh penyelesaian penuh, kos dan adalah diperintahkan bahawa sesalinan Writ dan Pernyataan Tuntutan kedua-duanya bertarikh 8 Julai 2025 ("Writ tersebut") disampaikan kepada kamu melalui Penyampaian Ganti iaitu dengan menampalkan sesalinan Writ tersebut di Papan Notis Mahkamah Majistret Kuala Selangor, ditampal di alamat terakhir Defendan yang diketahui iaitu di 67A, Jalan Ijok, Kampung KTM Lama, 45600 Bestari Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan ("selepas dari ini "alamat Pertama Defendan") dan di B-8-124, Apartment Subang Suria, Seksyen U5, 40150 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan ("selepas dari ini "alamat Kedua Defendan") berdasarkan kepada Perintah bertarikh 17 September 2025 dan juga mengiklankannya sekali (1) dalam surat khabar tempatan dan saya percaya bahawa penyampaian itu menjadi penyampaian yang sempurna dan cukup ke atas Defendan tersebut empatbelas (14) hari selepas dari tarikh pengiklanan dan penampalan tersebut yang mana terkemudian.

Sekiranya kamu berhajat untuk membuat pembelaan terhadap tindakan tersebut, kamu mestilah diwakili oleh Peguambela kamu di hadapan Mahkamah Majistret Kuala Selangor pada 22/10/2025 (secara E-Review), jam 9.00 pagi.
Sekiranya kamu gagal berbuat demikian maka Penghakiman Ingkar boleh diberikan terhadap kamu.

Bertarikh pada 9 haribulan Oktober 2025

.....tt.....
Tetuan Sandosh Anandan
Peguamcara bagi Plaintif

Notis Penyampaian Ganti Bentuk Iklan ini dikeluarkan oleh Tetuan Sandosh Anandan, Peguamcara bagi pihak Plaintif yang beralamat di Unit A502, Blok A, Kelana Square, No. 17, Jalan SS7/26, Kelana Jaya, 47301, Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.
Tel: 03-78065819 / 03-7804607
Fax: 03-78807409
(Ruj : SA/L/TNB/SUBRAMANIAM PETHAN/2106/2025/SA)

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NOTIS MENCARI IBU DAN BAPA KANDUNG

KEPADA SESIAPA YANG BERKENAAN
Sila ambil perhatian bahawa satu permohonan untuk perintah pengangkatan seorang kanak-kanak perempuan yang dilahirkan pada 18 Julai 2009, jam 6:15 pagi di Metro Medical Centre Klang Selangor telah difailkan melalui Saman Pemula Pengangkatan No: WA-58-62-08/2025.

Permohonan tersebut telah ditetapkan untuk Pengurusan Kes secara E-Review pada 28 Oktober 2025, jam 8:30 pagi di Mahkamah Sesyen Sivil 2, Kompleks Mahkamah Kuala Lumpur, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Halim (Jalan Duta), 50506 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, di mana kehadiran ibu dan bapa kandung kanak-kanak tersebut adalah diwajibkan.

Sila hubungi Encik Seoow (peguam) dari firma Tetuan Herng & Co melalui No. Tel: 017-6228761 atau melalui emel: herng.legal@gmail.com berkaitan dengan permohonan tersebut.

Sila ambil perhatian bahawa sekiranya kamu sebagai ibu dan bapa kandung kanak-kanak tersebut gagal hadir di Mahkamah pada tarikh dan masa yang ditetapkan tersebut, Mahkamah boleh memberikan perintah tanpa kehadiran kamu.

Notis ini dikeluarkan oleh Tetuan Herng & Co yang beralamat di No. 32, Jalan BP 6/13, Bandar Bukit Puchong, 47100 Puchong, Selangor.
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- Plan and perform periodic mechanical and electrical maintenance on all printing and auxiliary equipment as instructed by the Maintenance Supervisor.
- Ensure all repair work is completed the same day meets operational standard.

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- To develop, implement and monitor Occupational Safety & Healty and Environment training program and conduct in-house training periodically.
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Joker vanquishes exhaustion

Serbian pushes through to Shanghai quarters

NOVAK DJOKOVIC *(pic)* banished exhaustion and played through an ankle injury scare on Tuesday to make it to the quarterfinals of the Shanghai Masters, beating Spain's Jaume Munar 6-3, 5-7, 6-2.

The hard-won victory keeps Djokovic on track as the favourite to take a record-extending fifth title in the Chinese financial hub, with other top seeds already withdrawn or knocked out.

The 38-year-old almost looked unable to continue when the match went to a decider, but he conjured up the energy to break his decade-younger opponent twice in the third set.

"Thank you, thank you everyone, I love you!" he shouted in Chinese to the adoring crowd before leaving court almost immediately after play finished.



The 24-time Grand Slam champion had a good start despite the 84% humidity, breaking Munar in the fourth game.

Djokovic's problems began shortly afterwards when his left ankle slid out behind him as he rushed towards the net, and he had to take a medical timeout.

He grimaced in pain as he was attended to by an on-court physio, but managed to resume to hold the fifth game.

Djokovic received treatment again in the second set, and looked increasingly fatigued, crouching over frequently in between rallies and throwing up on court.

Chinese fans waving Serbian flags roared in support, but 41st-ranked Munar ultimately broke in the 12th game of the second set after an unforced error from his opponent.

An agonised Djokovic dropped to the court and remained splayed out as a medic rushed over.

But he picked himself up for a compelling third-set revival, breaking in the first and seventh games and sending the stadium into a frenzy.

Djokovic is now the oldest player to reach an ATP Masters 1000 quarterfinal, and the highest-ranking player left in Shanghai.

He will next face 44th-ranked Zizou Bergs. The Belgian took Canada's Gabriel Diallo down to the wire, prevailing in a prolonged third set tiebreak 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (10-8).

World No. 11 Holger Rune, who has also struggled with the conditions, called on Tuesday for tennis authorities to bring in a heat policy for events like Shanghai.

The Dane is through to the last eight after he took out France's Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard 6-4, 6-7 (7-9), 6-3. He will face qualifier Valentin Vacherot, who upset the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor 4-6, 7-6 (7-1), 6-4. – AFP

Swiatek eases past Bouzkova

WORLD NO. 2 Iga Swiatek enjoyed a victorious debut at the Wuhan Open on a scorching Tuesday that saw Emma Raducanu and Jelena Ostapenko both retire from their matches.

Swiatek, who had an opening-round bye, eased past the Czech Republic's Marie Bouzkova 6-1, 6-1 to book a third-round clash with Belinda Bencic.

After her win, Swiatek called on organisers to take player safety into account when scheduling matches on the outside courts, where there is no roof that can be closed to control the temperature.

"I feel like it's getting hotter in different places over the years," she said. "I'm just trying to use my experience, recover well between the points, and just spend all my energy on having the best quality possible. But for sure it's a challenge."

High temperatures above 30°C forced organisers to put the heat rule into effect on Monday, where play was suspended on the outside courts.

"I'm happy I didn't play yesterday (Monday) because I think it was too much for most of the players," said Swiatek, who needed just 79 minutes to get through her match.

Earlier, Raducanu had her blood pressure and other vitals checked before retiring with dizziness from her first-round match when down 6-1, 4-1 to American Ann Li.

Ostapenko, who was scheduled on a roofless outside court, also had her vitals checked and was feeling unwell before she retired, citing heat illness, while down 6-0, 2-1 to Sorana Cirstea.

Meanwhile, four-time major champion Naomi Osaka claimed her first victory at the Wuhan Open with a hard-fought 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 victory over Canada's Leylah Fernandez.

Chinese wildcard Zhang Shuai, ranked 142 in the world, stunned 14th-seeded Emma Navarro 6-2, 2-6, 6-3. – AFP

Morikawa not to blame for 'rude' Ryder Cup fans

COLLIN MORIKAWA admitted yesterday that rowdy US fans crossed a line at the Ryder Cup but said he was not to blame despite calling for "absolute chaos".

The two-time major winner said on the eve of last month's tournament that he was looking for home fans to pump up the volume and "go crazy" at Bethpage Black in New York.

Europe won after three days of fierce competition which saw American fans barrack European players relentlessly and at one stage hurl beer at Rory McIlroy's wife Erica.

Morikawa told reporters in Japan, where he plays this week's Baycurrent Classic on the US PGA Tour, that his comments had been taken "a little out of context".

"Ryder Cups are meant to have a lot of energy and I think me saying the word 'chaos', I didn't mean for them to be rude," said the 28-year-old.

"That's not on me, I believe, to take credit for people being rude."

Morikawa said he simply "wanted energy" from the American fans.

"I wanted people to be proud of the country they're rooting for," he said.

"I don't think it was me saying one word and everyone listened – I don't think I have the power to do that."

McIlroy, who bore the brunt of the abuse, described the conduct of the American fans at Bethpage Black as "unacceptable".

US golf legend Tom Watson said he was "ashamed" of the American fans' behaviour.

Morikawa agreed that "it probably crossed the line out there".

"It wasn't in my group but that's what people were hearing," he said. "There's a line that needs to be drawn, I believe.

"I think we have to learn how to find that division of what's appropriate and what's not," he added. – AFP

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DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI SHAH ALAM
DALAM NEGERI SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN, MALAYSIA
SAMAN PEMULA NO: BA-24NCVC-759-04/2024

Dalam Perkara mengenai Seksyen 319 dan Seksyen 320 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965;
Dan
Dalam Perkara mengenai Seksyen 418 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965;
Dan
Dalam Perkara Kaveat Pendaftar Atas Tanah melalui No. Perserahan 001B33717/2023 yang didaftarkan pada 02 haribulan Ogos, 2023 terhadap tanah yang dipegang di bawah GRN 340898, Lot 8181, Mukim Dengkil, Daerah Sepang, Negeri Selangor
Dan
Dalam perkara mengenai Gadaian Atas Tanah melalui No. Perserahan 35497/2023 yang didaftarkan pada 27 haribulan April



SHORTS

Leaving Arsenal was never on the cards, says Trossard

BELGIAN forward Leandro Trossard said there was never any question of him leaving Arsenal at the start of the season, despite speculation about a transfer away from the club.

Trossard joined the London club in 2023 from Brighton & Hove Albion and has played 97 Premier League games for them, scoring 21 goals.

"There are always rumours like that. Leaving has never really been an option. I feel very good at Arsenal," he said.

"At the beginning of the season, I struggled a bit with an injury. I think those rumours arose because of the lack of minutes."

Trossard has fought his way back into the Premier League leaders' squad. "I've had some good weeks, both individually and with Arsenal," he added.

"I'm finally a fit footballer again, a player in top form. I'm very happy about that. I've played a lot in recent weeks, I've done my thing, and I feel good about that."

Belgium have two decisive games this week with the fixture against North Macedonia followed by a trip to Cardiff to take on Wales.

Ex-Barcelona defender Alba to retire at end of season

FORMER Spain and Barcelona defender Jordi Alba will retire from football at the end of the Major League Soccer (MLS) season, the Inter Miami player said yesterday.

Alba began his youth career at Barcelona, who released him for being too small, but was re-signed in 2012 from Valencia and went on to spend 11 seasons at the Catalan club.

He joined Inter Miami in 2023, linking up with former teammates Lionel Messi, Sergio Busquets and Luis Suarez, while another former Barca colleague, Javier Mascherano, is the current head coach.

"The time has come to close a truly meaningful chapter in my life," Alba said in a video posted on *Instagram*.

"I've decided to bring my professional football career to an end at the conclusion to this season. I do so with complete conviction, with peace, and with happiness.

The 36-year-old retired from international football in 2023 after making 93 appearances for Spain.

Alba won six La Liga titles at Barcelona, and the Champions League, the Club World Cup and five Copa del Rey. In the US he won the Leagues Cup and Supporters' Shield, and will bow out in November after the MLS playoffs.

Amorim's selection headache

Mount proving key to United's plans and exposing more flaws in recruitment

BY **RICHARD JOLLY**

"I LOVE THAT KID," said Ruben Amorim, early in his reign at Manchester United. There are no prizes for guessing it wasn't an ode to Marcus Rashford, Alejandro Garnacho or Antony. Or, indeed, to Andre Onana, Kobbie Mainoo or Rasmus Hojlund.

But Amorim may be in good company. Thomas Tuchel loved Mason Mount, as did Frank Lampard. Gareth Southgate liked him. Erik ten Hag loved him enough to spend an initial £55 million (RM319m) on him. Amorim loves him, too.

Mount can seem the footballing equivalent of a teacher's pet. Not every fan has shared the various managers' fondness for him, especially as injuries have turned a Champions League winner and Chelsea's two-time player of the year into another indictment of United's transfer business, but there are days that provide reminders of Mount's quality.



Possibly United's two best halves of the season, certainly as an attacking force, were the opening periods against Burnley and Sunderland.

Mount was integral to both, even if the caveat is that the opponents were both Championship clubs last season.

He scored against Sunderland, even if the damning detail is that it was a first Premier League goal at Old Trafford for a player in his third season with United.

But Mount had a rarity value in the squad Amorim inherited: he already had a track record of prospering in a 3-4-3 formation.

He may have spent a few minutes at Brentford strangely masquerading as a left wing-back as Amorim refused to change shape, but he is a classic inside-forward; he fits the left-sided No. 10 role he occupied on Saturday.



Ruben Amorim (top) and Mason Mount.

"I think Mason Mount can give us more a midfielder than a winger or a striker," said Amorim. "He can defend really well, he is really smart, he can attack really well."

Mount's status as a connector endears him to managers. So, too, his off-the-ball work.

"I see myself as bringing a lot of energy into the team and setting off the press at times, being a bit of a catalyst going forward," said the England international.

"So that's always something that I focus on, helping the people around me and really bringing the energy."

If there is energy, there is also synergy with his manager. And yet, for the second time in his United career, confusion in their recruitment. Coincidentally or not, each has involved Matheus Cunha.

Two years ago, on Mount's United debut, Ten Hag's tactical plan, of fielding his new recruit and Bruno Fernandes as high No. 8s, was destroyed on day one as Cunha ran through an emptied midfield for Wolves.

Two years on, United spent £62.5 million (RM362m) on the Brazilian, a left-sided No. 10 who can score far more goals than Mount – 15 compared to one in the Premier League last season – but who lacks his defensive resolve.

"If Mount leads the press, there are times when Cunha doesn't even join in. Mount can be the ultimate team player, Cunha more of a solo act.

Maybe Mount's misfortune with injuries meant Amorim was banking on being without him; that he could not construct a team around a player he may have expected to be on the treatment table. But he bought a player who threatened to render him a serial substitute.

Instead, seven games into his United career, Cunha has no goals and no assists. He was one of those dropped after the disappointment of defeat to Brentford. His encouraging debut against Arsenal is a more distant memory.

Amorim made his first summer signing a player who operates in the position in a 3-4-3 shape that best suits Mount, and, while the Portuguese prefers to field his captain deeper in midfield, Fernandes also.

It was a decision with another significance. United activated Cunha's £62.5 million release clause, but Brentford used that price as a benchmark when selling Bryan Mbeumo. Then Benjamin Sesko became the most expensive attacker of the trio in a deal that could come to £73 million (RM423m).

At which point, it was logical to conclude that Amorim's preferred front three would be the £200 million (RM1.16b) triumvirate. That investment felt all the greater a statement, given United's many other needs.

Rewind to the end of last season, and there was a case for arguing that, if Amorim could make three big buys, they should be a forward, a central midfielder and a proven goalkeeper; others might have opted for a high-class wing-back.

Instead, the wing-back who did join was the rookie Diego Leon, the goalkeeper who eventually arrived was the relatively unknown Senne Lammens, who debuted on Saturday.

Instead, Amorim overloaded on forwards and, while the evidence of other games could lend itself to different conclusions, United look a better side with Mount on the pitch.

Amorim talked of "different characteristics" for different matches. Another interpretation is that there will soon be a different manager for those games, probably one who is not as devoted to 3-4-3.

Mount and Cunha are scarcely footballing doppelgangers; as Amorim suggested, the Englishman is more of a midfielder while the Brazilian is more of a forward.

Yet in a 4-3-3 or 4-2-3-1 formation, they could again be competing for the same spot.

Two years after Cunha got Mount's time at Old Trafford off to a false start, now there has been something of a role reversal.

And in the process, he has posed a problem for the United manager, whether Amorim or a successor. Who, if history is any guide, may love Mount. – The Independent

England's golden generation were 'egotistical losers', says Gerrard

FORMER England and Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard believes ego and club rivalry prevented the Three Lions from winning international tournaments during his time as a player.

Branded a "golden generation", Gerrard was part of an immensely talented squad that failed to get beyond the quarter-finals of a major tournament under a number of different managers.

The 45-year-old, who won 114 international caps, led Liverpool to the Champions League in 2005.

Manchester United's crop of England stars, including the likes of Rio Ferdinand, Paul Scholes and Wayne Rooney and the Chelsea contingent of Ashley Cole, John Terry and Frank Lampard also enjoyed Premier League and Champions League success at club level.

But Gerrard said those club divisions prevented England from gelling as a team.

"We were all egotistical losers," Gerrard told the Rio Ferdinand Presents podcast, highlighting the camaraderie that now exists between the same players in their punditry careers.

"So why didn't we connect when we were 20, 21, 22, 23? Was it ego? Was it rivalry?

"It was down to the culture within England. We weren't friendly or connected. We weren't a team. We never at any stage became a real good, strong team."

England are still waiting to end their wait since the 1966 World Cup to win a major men's international tournament.

However, they did reach the final of the past two European Championships under Gareth Southgate.

After losing the Euro 2024 final Southgate stood down, with Thomas Tuchel now in charge of England's hopes at next year's World Cup.

"Gareth Southgate is underrated for how he connected with the England team," Gerrard said.

"Because for me, the talent was there (in my time). The players were there. The level of games we were all playing at was there to go and do better than what we did.

"We had a little bit of bad luck with penalties or whatever. We have to take responsibility, but I've got a big frustration when I look back at England that we never did better.

"I think it's a combination of different things, but one of the big things for me was we weren't a team. We were a group of individuals with talent and it never works like that."

Gerrard's own managerial career has stalled after poor spells at Aston Villa and Saudi side Al Ettifaq.

However, he is among the favourites for a return to Glasgow giants Rangers, who he won the Scottish Premiership with in the 2020/21 season.

"There's a part of me that still feels that there's a bit of unfinished business in terms of wanting to go in and face another couple of exciting challenges," the 45-year-old said on getting back into management.

"But I want a certain type of challenge. If in an ideal world they come available, I'll jump at them. If they don't, I won't go back in.

"I want to be at a team that's going to compete to win because I think that suits me better." – AFP

Kudus promises 'more to come' after first Spurs goal

BY **MARK WALKER**

MOHAMMED KUDUS promised there was "more to come" after his first goal for Tottenham sealed a battling 2-1 Premier League win against Leeds at Elland Road.

The Ghana forward, signed from West Ham for £55 million (RM311m) in July, fired home via a deflection in the second half after Leeds winger Noah Okafor's close-range finish had cancelled out Mathys Tel's opener.

Kudus struck his first Spurs goal in his 10th appearance in all competitions and also made his fourth assist in the top-flight this season with an excellent touch for Tel's thumping finish.

"It feels really good," Kudus told *Spursplay*. "Something I've been working on for the past month, to score my first (Tottenham) goal and it will open doors for more to come.

"Sometimes it's not about winning the first ball, it's the reaction for the second ball and when I went inside, I just thought, 'shoot in the corner' and I'm so glad it went in."

Tottenham became the first team to win at Elland Road in the league since September last year, but were forced to dig deep, showing their battling qualities under Thomas Frank.

Kudus added: "The game was less about tactics, it was about great determination and who wants it more because they were running and fighting for the ball.

"We knew that we had to match their intensity. That's what the game was about and I think every one of us was on top to get the win.

"I love it, however the opponents want to play, we will definitely match up to that."

Both sides created plenty of chances. Tel's first half header struck the crossbar, while Leeds hit the woodwork before the break through Joe Rodon's header and substitute Joel Piroe was denied a stoppage-time equaliser by Guglielmo Vicario's one-handed save.

Leeds' third league defeat of the season has left them on eight points from seven matches and while boss Daniel Farke acknowledged they must start converting more chances, he was pleased with another competitive display.

He also said his side had had little luck so far and urged his players not to dwell on their disappointment.

"We are a newly-promoted site and if we had won each of the points that we deserve – I would say at least six points more during the season – then we would be talking about being in the top four. But this is not realistic.

"It's quite normal that sometimes you are unlucky not to win more points.

"If you then think about it and doubt yourself or feel sorry for yourself, this is suddenly when you struggle to deliver performances like this.

"If we keep delivering performances like this, we'll be fine." – The Independent

'I'm just so, so happy'

Willian used sparingly by Maresca, scored first Chelsea goal to topple Liverpool

BY **ROBERT OCONNOR**

CHELSEA match-winner Estevao Willian said he "couldn't be happier" after scoring his first Premier League goal in the fifth minute of stoppage time to defeat Liverpool on Sunday.

The 18-year-old has been used sparingly by head coach Enzo Maresca since arriving at Stamford Bridge in the summer while he acclimatises to English football, but he was sent on in the second half to devastating effect as the champions were condemned to a third straight loss in all competitions.

It brought a dramatic finale to what had been a fascinating match, Estevao beating Liverpool's Andy Robertson to the ball at the far post to squeeze Marc Cucurella's cross over the line with only seconds to play.

"I'm just so, so happy," he told Chelsea's website. "It's an amazing feeling to score my first Premier League goal and in such a big game, I'm just so happy."

There have been flashes this season of the teenager's obvious talent, though he has rarely been used from the start of matches by Maresca.

Injury to Cole Palmer has opened up space in that part of the pitch and it felt significant that the Blues got the better of Arne Slot's champions without their usual talisman.

Maresca has long had to field questions about whether his side can be effective without Palmer, on whom they have often looked reliant, but there is an excitement that in Estevao the club have unearthed another star of similar creative potential.

"I feel great right now and it's so good that the manager has so much confidence in me," Estevao said.

"When I went on, he told me to just play my own game and to try and make an impact.

"He told me to try and score or create a goal and thankfully I managed to do that."

A high-octane game in west London culminated in a breathless finish. Chelsea – who had eight players missing through injury and suspension – ran Liverpool all over the pitch in the first half, taking the lead through a sublime long-range bullet from Moises Caicedo.

Later on, after Cody Gakpo had pounced on Alexander Isak's lovely controlled flick-on to equalise, they battled to close off avenues of attack as the visitors found their confidence and their rhythm, before the late drama.

"Things at Chelsea have gone a lot better so far than I maybe imagined," Estevao said.

"I have fantastic teammates and coaching staff around me that help me each day, and it's very helpful that I have my family with me and they've helped me really settle into life in England and the Premier League. I couldn't be happier."

Liverpool's own creative focal point, Mohamed Salah, who returned after being left on the bench for Wednesday's loss to Galatasaray, missed several chances for his side to take the lead when the game was 1-1.

Slot said: "Did he create so much today because he didn't play during the week, or did he miss today because he missed a bit of sharpness? We will never know.

"He was many times in the position that I would like him in. He had many opportunities to do what he's done so often, but he's a human being." – The Independent



Estavao Willian (top) and Enzo Maresca.

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3rd Prize	8388

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1002	6124	2350	5116
3736	7159	0883	9772
3168	4699	8094	5376
9946	2097	1707	6228

4D JACKPOT

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7630 0245	0245 7630
7630 8388	8388 7630
0245 8388	8388 0245

Jackpot 2 RM 215,053.74

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2ND 7 5 1 6 1
3RD 9 5 3 2 4
4TH 9 3 2 8
5TH 3 2 8
6TH 2 8

6D TOTO

1ST 3 1 2 9 3 2

2ND	3 1 2 9 3	or	1 2 9 3 2	
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3rd Prize	5310

Starters		Consolation	
8893	9188	8553	5344
7912	7383	8580	3806
3649	1377	9056	3298
1430	9948	7726	4384
8539	5490	6173	0339

1+3D Jackpot

Jackpot 1 RM8,641,108.00

1528 + 8282	8282 + 1528
1528 + 5310	5310 + 1528
8282 + 5310	5310 + 8282

Jackpot 2 RM113,446.90

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2nd Prize 448 282 +	Bonus MONKEY	2nd Prize Bonus RM380,000.00
3rd Prize 055 310 +	Bonus HORSE	3rd Prize Bonus RM549,097.10

Starters		Consolation	
578 893	449 188	568 553	445 344
637 912	467 383	578 580	353 806
313 649	411 377	909 056	753 298
351 430	619 948	467 726	334 384
838 539	345 490	206 173	120 339

3D

1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
528	282	310

3D Jackpot

Jackpot RM725,068.50

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528 + 310 + 282	310 + 528 + 282
282 + 528 + 310	310 + 282 + 528

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‘Motac may organise LTdL26’

THE Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (Motac) may take over the organisation of next season’s Le Tour de Langkawi (LTdL) from the National Sports Council (NSC), said Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh.

She said LTdL has long been recognised as a highly successful sporting product that also contributes significantly to the country’s tourism.

“I’ve spoken with Motac Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, who fully supports LTdL. We’re coordinating to determine whether it would be more appropriate for LTdL to come under Motac or NSC, since NSC focuses more on elite and high-performance sports that bring medals to Malaysia.

“The discussion is ongoing. LTdL is broadcast to European countries and helps promote our destinations to them,” she said yesterday.

She added that if LTdL were to be placed under Motac, funding could be channelled through joint efforts between ministries, including the Youth and Sports Ministry.

Since 2023, LTdL, Asia’s oldest cycling tour, has been organised by NSC. Yesterday, the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) maintained the ProSeries status for LTdL for three years from 2026 to 2028.

UCI vice-president Datuk Amarjit Singh said the decision marks a major achievement for Malaysia. – Bernama

Fifa’s account of heritage player issue inaccurate

THE Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) has stressed that the International Federation of Association Football’s (Fifa) decision on Malaysia’s heritage players presented an inaccurate account of the issue.

In a statement on Wednesday, FAM said the allegation that players had “obtained or been aware of falsified documents” was baseless, as no solid evidence had been presented so far, adding that all seven heritage players involved are legitimate Malaysian citizens.

“As previously explained, the mistake occurred due to a wrong submission – an administrative error – when a staff member mistakenly uploaded documents from an agent instead of official documents issued by the National Registration Department (JPN).

“An official appeal is now being prepared using original and valid documents verified by the government of Malaysia. FAM will submit a formal appeal on this conclusion and remains committed to defending the integrity of Malaysian football based on facts and authentic documents,” the statement said. – Bernama

Cheong Min unfazed, tougher task awaits at Thailand SEA Games

CAMBODIA SEA Games double gold medallist Tan Cheong Min faces a tougher challenge at the 2025 edition in Thailand, as her three pet events have been combined into one.

She said that *Nanquan*, *Nandao* and *Nangun* used to be contested either separately or a combination of two events.

“In Cambodia, I struck gold in the *Nanquan* and the combined *Nandao-Nangun* events. This time, in Thailand, they are combining all three events.

“This is highly challenging because all the Southeast Asian nations have extremely talented exponents, and everyone is capable of getting on the podium,” she told reporters when met during the visit by the 2025 SEA Games chef de mission at the National Sports Council yesterday.

Although the new format raises the difficulty level, the national *wushu* queen remains confident and determined to do her best and defend Malaysia’s status as a *wushu* superpower in the region.

She also stressed that she and her teammates are working on preparing thoroughly in the next two months to perfect their routine and correct any weaknesses detected during last month’s World Wushu Championships in Brasilia.

“Although we are familiar with the new competition rules, we still need to step up our preparations. Since returning from the World Wushu Championships, we have analysed our every mistake and are modifying our routines to ensure we perform at the highest level (at the Thailand SEA Games),” she said.



National *wushu* athlete Tan Cheong Min. – ***BERNAMAPIC***

Apart from the individual event, Cheong Min will also compete in the team event.

The Wushu Federation of Malaysia had previously targeted only one gold medal at the biennial Games, with Cheong Min being the one they are banking on.

The 2025 Thailand SEA Games will be held from Dec 9-20. – Bernama

Let FAM complete its appeal: Yeoh

Sports minister urges all quarters to give national football governing body space and time

YOUTH and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh has urged all parties to give the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) space to complete the appeal process regarding the sanction imposed by Fifa, before taking steps to form any commission of inquiry.

She said forming a special commission at this stage would be premature, as the case is still under appeal at the world football governing body.

“Let FAM complete its appeal first. If the appeal has not been finalised and we start investigating or setting up a commission, that would be like ‘jumping the gun’.

“I understand many are calling for immediate action, but we have to follow the process step by step. Let the appeal be completed first, and only then can we discuss the next course of action, including investigations or improvements,” she said after visiting the final camp of the 2025 Sepak Takraw League (STL) Clinic at Akademi Sepak Takraw Malaysia yesterday.

Earlier, Fifa issued the full judgment and the reasons behind the disciplinary action taken against FAM and seven heritage players after confirming inconsistencies in the original documents submitted during the players’ registration process.

According to the official report titled “Notification of the Grounds of the Decision”, Fifa’s Disciplinary Committee stated that the action was taken following a breach of Article 22 of the Fifa Disciplinary Code involving the falsification and alteration of official documents.

The investigation found that several supporting documents submitted by FAM, including the birth certificates of the players’ grandparents, contained details that did not match the original records from the players’ actual countries of birth.

The seven players suspended for 12 months are Gabriel Palmero, Facundo Garces, Rodrigo Holgado, Imanol Machuca, Joao Figueiredo, Jon Irazabal and Hector Hevel.

Commenting on the possibility of any assistance or support from the Youth and Sports Ministry (KBS) to FAM or the players involved, Hannah said no request had been received so far from the national football governing body.

“So far, no assistance is required from KBS as FAM has its own lawyers and is well-versed with Fifa’s regulations,” Yeoh said. – Bernama

Malaysia focus on task at hand against Laos

THE Malaysian football team, still reeling from Fifa’s accusations of forging the documents of seven heritage players, intend to block out the outside noise and focus on on-field matters.

Harimau Malaya head coach Peter Cklamovski stressed that the issue has not had any effect on the team, who are currently in Vientiane for their Group F match against Laos in the 2027 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Asian Cup Qualifiers at the New Laos National Stadium today (8pm).

“What has happened (Fifa sanctions) is beyond our control. There is nothing we can do, so we plan to focus fully on the match against Laos.

“The players have shown a strong mentality and believe in the football philosophy we have implemented. We also want to continue to inspire Malaysians that this team is capable of creating something special,” he told the pre-match press conference in Vientiane yesterday.

Cklamovski also reminded his men not to underestimate the capability of Laos, who are ranked 185th in the world, compared with Malaysia’s 123rd position.

“Laos are a tough team. I want my players to give their full commitment and execute the game plan that has been set.

“Our mission is to win, keep a clean sheet and score as many goals as possible,” he said.

In 19 meetings with Laos since 1968, Malaysia have recorded 13 wins, five draws and just one defeat. – Bernama

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Joker vanquishes exhaustion

Story on page 28



Amorim's selection headache

Story on page 29

'Let FAM complete its appeal'

Story on page 31

Contented Kane

England captain 'all in' for Bayern, dampens Premier League return



BY **RICHARD JOLLY**

HARRY KANE has swapped his *lederhosen* for his England tracksuit but he expects to wear the traditional Bavarian garb again.

The England captain got dressed up this weekend, as Bayern Munich's players have to do, for Oktoberfest.

It is unlikely to be his last. After this season, Kane has one year left on the deal he signed when he joined in 2023.

It contains a release clause that goes down by the window, but getting Kane out of Germany is not as simple as that. Nor, indeed, is relying on signing him on a free transfer when his contract expires in 2027.

While Thomas Frank had hinted at the possibility of a return to Tottenham, saying their record scorer would be "more than welcome", Kane is increasingly open to extending his stay with Bayern.

Their sporting director Max Eberl has suggested Bayern will try to tie Kane down. If it long felt probable Kane would return to England, perhaps to break Alan Shearer's record of 260 Premier League goals, now he is less sure.

"Right now, I am fully all in with Bayern," said the 32-year-old. "I have still got this season and another season. It is not like I am in my last year, it is not like there is any panic in that sense.

"In terms of staying there longer I could definitely see that. I am extremely happy there, my wife and kids are happy to stay and as you get older that is a big part of any decision you make.

"I have not had those conversations with Bayern yet but if they were to arise I would be willing to talk.

"If there is going to be an extension it has to work for everyone and it has to have a clear vision on where we see the club.

"In terms of the Premier League, I don't know. If you had asked me when I first left to go to Bayern, I would have said for sure I would come back.

"Now I have been there a couple of years I would probably say that has gone down a little bit; not so much, but I wouldn't say I would never go back."

That shift in his thinking is not definitive but it is indicative. Kane is in no rush to decide but cuts a contented figure. He praises his manager, Vincent Kompany, repeatedly.

Bayern have allowed him to realise an ambition as well as to end a rather simplistic criticism.

"I think I was interested in how I would feel after winning a trophy," said the Bundesliga winner.

Then there are the goals: more than a century for Bayern, 18 this season already. It is his best start to a campaign.

"Especially early in my career, I didn't score in August for seven or eight years," Kane reflected. Once again, he has remedied his record.

Meanwhile, he sat out the Premier League's great striking summer spending spree.

Nick Woltemade, who Bayern seemed to see as his long-term replacement, instead joined Newcastle. They have an added reason to stick with Kane.

And a model of self-improvement believes he has added more to his game with Bayern. "Am I a better player?" Kane mused. "I'd say yes.

"Just the feeling I have on the pitch. I feel like the team we have this season is the strongest I've ever had. The way I'm seeing the game is at the highest level I've ever had."

He is not slowing down, he insists. "My numbers are 11km a game, a lot of high-speed running," he explained. Other statistics are still more impressive.

"He has 74 goals for England, one short of 400 in his club career. Maybe that is why, when Kane studies his performances, he arrows in on other things, on his contributions to the team.

"Sometimes when I'm watching the games back, I'm more looking forward to watching tackles or one of my defensive actions than watching my goals," he said.

In one respect, of course, Kane is not bored of scoring: not when his appetite for goals is such that he already has two hattricks and five braces this season.

Maybe it puts him in competition with Erling Haaland, another who could reach the 20-goal mark that many would consider a success for an entire season in the first half of October.

"Sometimes even subconsciously, maybe you're pushing each other to reach different levels," he said.

For a long time, Kane's silverware came from his scoring feats, with World Cup and Premier League Golden Boots. He would like another individual accolade.

"Obviously I would love to win the *Ballon d'Or*," said the man who came 13th in the 2025 voting. To do that, as he recognises, probably entails winning the World Cup or the Champions League.

And Bayern could provide his best chance of the latter. It might offer another reason to carry on donning his *lederhosen*. – The Independent

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