



'Don't question peace efforts for Palestine'

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Prime minister urges Malaysians to support humanitarian missions and avoid divisive political debate.



Thumbs up to bigger allocations for education

With RM66.2b set aside for early childhood learning, vocational and higher studies, experts call for better execution and oversight.

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RM15 mil to boost Second Chance Programme

Initiative aimed at helping to free individuals from bankruptcies and rebuild their lives.

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Prime Minister cum Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, accompanied by Deputy Finance Minister Lim Hui Ying, shows the text of his Budget 2026 speech as he leaves the Finance Ministry in Putrajaya for Parliament yesterday. - ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

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Anwar unveils RM470b Budget

Expansionary spending plan for 2026, up from RM452 bil previously, designed to keep economy humming while cleaning up governance and plugging leakages without squeezing taxpayers.



Anwar unveils record RM470 billion budget

➤ Spending plan, up from RM452 billion previously, designed to keep economy humming while cleaning up governance, plugging leakages and reducing tax burden



WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT



Nur Syafiq Che Isa, 35
Malaysian Bar Council
Senior officer

“More bus services need to be provided under the transport allocation for Klang Valley, particularly on high-demand DRT routes.

DRT should remain a trial, not a permanent solution. Successful routes should be upgraded to regular, frequent bus services to reduce long waiting times and multiple drop-offs.”

“Stronger investment in healthcare is needed, including more doctors, nurses and specialists.

Rural hospitals must be upgraded with better facilities and technology to ensure quality care for all. Increased funding is vital to ensure equal access to quality treatment nationwide.”



Muhammad Syazwan Azmi, 35
Property valuer

“The government’s education allocation should be used to strengthen the system by making English compulsory and improving proficiency while still valuing our national language.

Stronger English skills will also boost learning in subjects like Science and Mathematics.”



Tunku Dara Tunku Tan Sri Naquiah Tuanku Ja'afar, 81
English Speaking Union
of Malaysia
Chairperson

“After Budget 2026, the government should consider a wealth or inheritance tax to generate fairer revenue.

The richest 10% control most of Malaysia’s wealth, highlighting deep inequality.

Rather than relying on indirect taxes, taxing extreme wealth could provide stronger support for healthcare, education and infrastructure.”



Ng Liven, 16
Student/activist

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia is cracking open its wallet again - RM470 billion to be exact - as the government doubles down on reform, resilience and a dash of fiscal daring under Budget 2026.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the expansionary spending plan, up from RM452 billion last year, is designed to keep the economy humming while cleaning up governance, plugging leakages and avoiding the dreaded “T” word - taxes.

Instead of squeezing taxpayers, Putrajaya is consolidating national resources through GLICs, statutory bodies and GLCs while staying faithful to the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA).

The allocation includes RM338.2 billion for operating expenditure, RM81 billion for development, RM30 billion in GLIC investments, RM10 billion for public-private partnerships and RM10.8 billion for statutory bodies and GLCs.

Anwar said Malaysia’s GDP grew by a sturdy 4.4% in the first half of 2025 despite global headwinds. The revised GDP projection for 2025 stands at 4.0%-4.8%, while growth in 2026 is expected to be between 4.0% and 4.5%.

In tabling the Budget, themed “Driving the Madani Economy: Empowering the People”, Anwar said the government would stick with smarter spending rather than higher taxes.

“This approach has allowed us to enforce anti-corruption measures, curb smuggling and dismantle cartel networks without burdening the people.”

This is Anwar’s fourth Madani Budget and the first under the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP), setting the tone for the next five years of development.

➤ **Targeted subsidies save RM15.5 billion annually**

The government’s targeted subsidy plan is expected to save RM15.5 billion a year, ensuring that public funds reach those who need them most.

➤ **Persons with disabilities**

Nearly RM1.4 billion will be allocated to support persons with disabilities (PwD), including chronically bedridden individuals, unemployable PwD and allowances for PwD employers.

➤ **Expanding autism service centres nationwide**

Centres established in Peninsular Malaysia this year will expand operations to Labuan, Sabah and Sarawak.

➤ **Childcare**

Tax relief of RM3,000 for childcare or preschool fees for children up to six years old will be extended to registered daycare and transit care centres for children up to age 12.

➤ **Higher tax relief for disability-related care**

Tax relief for screening, early intervention and rehabilitation for children with disabilities under 18 will be increased from RM6,000 to RM10,000.

➤ **Senior citizens support**

Welfare allocations for senior citizens will be increased to RM1.26 billion, benefiting 180,000 elderly individuals through allowances, socio-economic aid and activity centres.

➤ **Free PTPTN education for B40 students**

From 2026, B40 students will enjoy free education under PTPTN, supported by RM18.6 billion for universities and scholarships.

➤ **Mobile courts to handle labour and child cases**

Mobile court services will be expanded to include Mobile Labour Courts and Mobile Children’s Courts with child-friendly witness rooms and specially equipped vehicles - ensuring justice remains accessible to all.

➤ **Improving mobility and accessibility**

The government will provide 100 special mobility vans, each fitted with a wheelchair lift and space for three users.

➤ **Expanding Madani mobile services for rural access**

Over RM110 million allocated to fund Madani Mobile Services to deliver government assistance directly to rural and remote communities.

➤ **Empowering Orang Asli communities**

RM412 million allocated to empower Orang Asli communities in line with the “Leave No One Behind” principle. Amendments to the Orang Asli Act 1954 will also be tabled to strengthen land and welfare rights.

➤ **Broader reach for Sabah and Sarawak mobile units**

Mobile Community Services will expand to 19 new areas in Sabah and Sarawak to improve rural outreach.

➤ **More mobile banks to serve remote populations**

Bank Simpanan Nasional will introduce four new mobile bank units, bringing the total to 20, serving over one million Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah recipients in remote areas.

➤ **Strengthen enforcement agencies**

Over RM700 million will be allocated to enhance enforcement agencies through training and new assets, curbing systemic leakages.

➤ **RM15.5 billion recovered under Madani governance drive**

Good governance is paying off. Enforcement agencies have recovered nearly RM15.5 billion in seized assets and penalties since the launch of the Madani framework.

➤ **Digital tax stamp and e-Invoice rollout in 2026**

A digital tax stamp with enhanced security features will be introduced to prevent forgery and leakages, supported by a centralised CCTV system at entry points.

➤ **Expanding MyDigital ID to 15 million users**

The MyDigital ID initiative will be expanded to 15 million users by the end of 2025, covering finance, telecoms, e-commerce and healthcare.

➤ **Tighter rules on duty-free vehicle exemptions**

To curb abuse, vehicles enjoying duty exemptions in Langkawi and Labuan will be limited to cars worth below RM300,000 from Jan 1, 2026.

➤ **Boosting tourism and domestic travel**

To spark domestic tourism ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026, Malaysians will enjoy income tax relief of up to RM1,000 for local travel. The campaign targets 47 million visitors and RM329 billion in receipts.

➤ **Tax deductions for anti-corruption efforts**

Anti-corruption programmes recognised by the MACC will qualify as national interest projects, with donors eligible for income tax deductions.

➤ **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**

TVET funding will rise to RM7.9 billion in 2026, up from RM7.5 billion, to expand talent in high-growth industries. The National TVET Council will get RM45 million to introduce AI and digital training for 10,000 *tahfiz* and *pondok* students, while TVET institutions under the Education Ministry will train 79,000 students with RM1.3 billion.

➤ **Training opportunities**

HRD Corp will provide three million training opportunities worth RM3 billion, focused on high-tech, digital and energy transition sectors.

Perbadanan Tabung Pembangunan Kemahiran will channel RM650 million to support 25,000 trainees in key industries like AI, electric vehicles and semiconductors.

➤ **Preparing locals for skilled jobs**

RM34 million allocated through the In-Industry Academy programme will prepare locals for skilled jobs and reduce reliance on low-skilled foreign workers.

GiattMara will train over 13,000 individuals from targeted groups including gig workers, while community colleges will continue lifelong learning programmes for PWD, the elderly, single mothers and *Orang Asli*.

➤ **Empower youth and boost employability**

RM682 million has been earmarked to empower youth, enhance employability and promote entrepreneurship.

➤ **New definition for youth age group**

From next year, “youth” will cover those aged 15 to 30, ensuring more focused national participation.

➤ **Reviving national service and enhancing training**

The revived National Service Training Programme gets RM250 million to instil patriotism and volunteerism, with a pilot at tertiary level before full rollout in 2027.

➤ **Enhance graduate employability**

Khazanah Nasional Bhd will allocate RM200 million for the K-Youth Programme, offering on-the-job training to 11,000 non-degree youths in strategic sectors such as semiconductors, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul, digital and technology.

Mara’s Industrial Boot Camp, which has trained nearly 5,000 youths with guaranteed jobs to continue with RM30 million.

➤ **Rakan Muda and rural youth development**

The revitalised Rakan Muda programme shifts from leisure to character-building, steering youth away from destructive behaviour. RM40 million will ensure outreach to remote and marginalised communities.

➤ **Encouraging youth entrepreneurship**

To boost youth entrepreneurship, BSN will provide RM150 million in financing for entrepreneurs aged 30 and below, while SME Corp’s TUBE programme gets RM12 million for training and business support.

The bottom line

Budget 2026 shows Malaysia is not cutting corners or cornershop subsidies just yet. It is a high-spending, reform-driven plan that mixes idealism with pragmatism, proving that good governance and growth can share the same wallet.

STORIES BY: AZURA ABAS, HASHINI KAVISHTRI KANNAN, IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE, QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI, HARITH KAMAL, KIRTINEE RAMESH AND FAIZ RUZMAN

Digital drive at heart of growth strategy

PETALING JAYA: Budget 2026 puts digital transformation firmly at the heart of Malaysia's growth strategy – a move that has drawn cautious optimism from the tech sector.

National Tech Association of Malaysia (Pikom) chairman Alex Liew said the Budget underscores Malaysia's ambition to advance its digital economy, but policy coherence and SME adoption remain weak links.

"Budget 2026 shows strong intent and investment in digital growth, but execution and inclusivity must now take centre stage. Malaysia must turn ambition into measurable impact, ensuring businesses, people and policies move together into the artificial intelligence (AI) era," he told *theSun*.

Pikom welcomed major allocations, including RM5.9 billion for research and innovation, RM20 million for the National AI Office and RM2 billion to develop a Sovereign AI Cloud, along with RM53 million for the Digital Acceleration Grant to boost AI, blockchain and quantum technology adoption.

The association also lauded the RM1 billion in financing and grants for SME automation and a new 50% tax deduction for SMEs investing in AI and cybersecurity training – a measure it said directly answers its long-standing call for stronger cyber-readiness incentives.

Pikom further noted HRD Corp's RM3 billion allocation for three million digital and high-tech training opportunities, in line with its proposal to accelerate reskilling.

However, Liew cautioned that turning allocations into real outcomes remains Malaysia's biggest challenge.

"Cybersecurity development requires an ecosystem-wide approach, not just training incentives. SME digital adoption also remains uneven, particularly among micro and rural enterprises that need stronger outreach and advisory support. Overlapping mandates between ministries and agencies risk diluting programme effectiveness and slowing execution.

"To ensure coherence, we again call for the establishment of a National Digital Council – one that aligns strategies, integrates ESG (environmental, social and governance) principles and strengthens procurement so local start-ups and system integrators can play a bigger role in national digitalisation."

Meanwhile, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan Institute for Artificial Intelligence and Big Data director Dr Muhammad Akmal Remli said Budget 2026 "demonstrates a strong and genuine commitment to position Malaysia as a serious player in AI".

"This is not symbolic, it's backed by careful planning and research. But AI must be for everyone.

"The benefits should reach SMEs, the public sector and rural communities. To become an AI nation by 2030, Malaysia must focus on long-term execution, sustained talent investment and a culture of innovation that evolves with technology."

Stronger and more inclusive education system



TOTAL BUDGET
RM470 BILLION

EDUCATION - RM66.2 BILLION
The largest allocation in Budget, rising from RM64.2 billion previously.

HEALTH - RM46.5 BILLION
Key initiative announced is allocation of RM1.2 billion for maintenance and repairs at all government hospitals and clinics.

DEFENCE AND HOME - RM43 BILLION
Defence Ministry allocated RM21.7 billion while Home Ministry to receive RM21.2 billion.

BORNEO PROJECTS - RM48 BILLION
Allocation for road projects includes Pan Borneo Highway, Sarawak-Sabah Link Road phases 1 and 2 and Trans Borneo Highway.

HIGHER EDUCATION - RM18.6 BILLION
Over RM400 million towards upgrading infrastructure and replacing outdated equipment in universities, polytechnics and community colleges.

Belanjawan 2026
MALAYSIA MADANI

theSun
Malaysian Paper

THESUN GRAPHICS BY HARITH KAMAL

➤ With RM66.2b set aside for early childhood learning, vocational and higher studies, experts call for better execution and oversight

PETALING JAYA: Budget 2026 continues to prioritise education, focusing on underdeveloped schools, early childhood nutrition and infrastructure expansion, while introducing new measures to strengthen parent-teacher engagement and support technical and higher education for disadvantaged students.

Malaysian Association for Education president Datuk Dr Mohd Majid Konting welcomed the substantial allocations for education, describing them as a strong start under the 13MP, particularly in supporting early childhood education and the B40 group to ensure no child is left behind.

"However, the success of these initiatives hinges on effective implementation," he said, pointing to recurring issues in project management and accountability highlighted in the Public Accounts Committee report.

"I just hope the implementation will be carried out effectively and efficiently to achieve maximum return on investment," he told *theSun*.

Mohd Majid added that Budget 2026 is likely the first to recognise artificial intelligence (AI) as an emerging education challenge.

"Strategically, the government has listed several AI-related initiatives that I believe will spur the development and application of AI knowledge in our society," he said.

Meanwhile, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia education expert Dr Anuar Ahmad said Budget 2026 largely follows the framework of previous budgets, maintaining focus on underdeveloped schools, teacher needs and infrastructure for disadvantaged areas.

"While the current allocation will enable gradual progress, additional funding is needed to fully address long-standing gaps in underdeveloped schools."

Anuar noted that the supplementary feeding programme remains largely unchanged, with RM870 million allocated to support around 870,000 children.

He emphasised that



malnutrition affects one in five primary schoolchildren, underscoring the need to expand the programme to reach more families from the B40 and lower M40 groups.

"Increasing this allocation would ensure children have access to proper nutrition, as low-income parents often prioritise rent, transport or other essentials over balanced meals.

"Countries like Japan, South Korea and those in Scandinavia provide school meals because it is crucial not just for learning but for growth and development."

Anuar also welcomed the government's move to build 35 new special education blocks at a cost of RM700 million, describing it as a clear sign of commitment to improving school infrastructure.

He said the RM800 million back-to-school assistance remains in place, with a new approach to encourage stronger parent-teacher engagement in monitoring student progress.

"The TVET sector also saw an increase in allocation to RM7.9 billion, signalling continued support for technical and vocational education as a viable pathway for students.

"Overall, the budget positions education as a key mechanism for national development while highlighting areas that still require attention, particularly nutrition programmes and initiatives for underdeveloped schools," he said.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced that the education sector's allocation under Budget 2026 has been raised to RM66.2 billion, up from the RM64.2 billion in 2025.

Of the RM18.6 billion allocated to the Higher Education Ministry, more than RM400 million will go towards refurbishing infrastructure and replacing outdated equipment in public universities, polytechnics and community colleges.

22 million to get RM100 Sara aid before festive season next year

PETALING JAYA: A total of 22 million Malaysians aged 18 and above will receive RM100 in Sumbangan Asas Rahmah (Sara) assistance in mid-February to help with preparations for Ramadan and Chinese New Year, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced yesterday.

He said all nine million

Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) recipients will continue receiving Sara aid of up to RM100 a month or RM1,200 annually, under Budget 2026.

"One million STR recipients under the eKasih category will receive up to RM200 per month, or RM2,400 annually, while single individuals will

receive RM600 a year, equivalent to RM50 monthly," he said, adding that the maximum household assistance will amount to RM4,600 – comprising RM2,200 from STR and RM2,400 from Sara – for families earning below RM2,500 monthly with five children.

"This will be disbursed in mid-

February to help with preparations for Ramadan and Chinese New Year."

Anwar said the Sara appreciation aid, distributed on Aug 31, had seen more than 70% utilised. Any unspent balance by December, he said, would be redirected to programmes for low-income groups.

The total allocation for STR and

Sara next year stands at RM15 billion, made possible through savings from targeted subsidy rationalisation, including diesel and RON95.

"To further ease living costs, RM1 billion will be allocated next year, including RM600 million to expand the Payung Rahmah programme to all state constituencies nationwide."

STORIES BY AZURA ABAS, HASHINI KAVISHTRI KANNAN, IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE, QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI, HARITH KAMAL, KIRTINEE RAMESH AND FAIZ RUZMAN

Stepping up efforts to give citizens a fresh start

PETALING JAYA: From bankruptcies to broken beginnings, the government is stepping up efforts to give Malaysians a fresh start.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced an allocation of RM15 million to strengthen the Second Chance Programme under the Madani initiative, aimed at helping individuals rebuild their lives.

He said since March 2023, 200,000 people have been freed from bankruptcy.

"The government will ensure every citizen is given a second chance to build a better life," he said.

To further this mission, the fast-track Second Chance Policy has been introduced to assist single parents, micro-entrepreneurs affected by crises, scam victims and individuals impacted by abandoned projects.

RM1.4b to strengthen rice industry

PETALING JAYA: The government has allocated RM1.4 billion under Budget 2026 to strengthen Malaysia's rice industry through four key initiatives, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The allocation will fund the next phase of the Tertiary Irrigation System, the Jeniang Water Transfer Project, the rehabilitation of problematic *padi* fields and the provision of foliar fertiliser for *padi* farmers.

Anwar said the new phase of the Tertiary Irrigation System is scheduled for completion in stages by the second quarter of 2030.

"The Jeniang Water Transfer Project will begin next year at an estimated cost of RM1.28 billion. It involves the construction of a new river to support irrigation for the five seasons in two years *padi* planting programme," he said when tabling Budget 2026 in Parliament yesterday.

To revitalise low-yield *padi* lands, RM100 million will be allocated for rehabilitation and infrastructure upgrades, including the introduction of a modern *padi* field model.

Govt allocates RM15m to assist individuals such as single parents, former drug addicts rebuild life under Second Chance initiative: PM

The policy streamlines support processes through simpler, targeted methods.

"The allocation will benefit 1,700 individuals, including former drug addicts in rehabilitation centres.

"We will also provide start-up incentives to 3,000 former female prisoners without family support, helping them generate income and rebuild their lives," Anwar said.

He also urged private companies to join hands in supporting second-chance initiatives to broaden their reach and impact.

The prime minister also announced that the hardcore



poverty rate has dropped to a historic low of 0.09%, equivalent to about 7,000 households nationwide – a sharp fall from 0.2% previously, based on the 2022 Food Poverty Line of RM1,198.

With the 2024 revision of the Food Poverty Line to RM1,236, the remaining hardcore poor are expected to be fully lifted out of

poverty by year-end.

Highlighting the importance of social enterprises in empowering vulnerable communities, Anwar said the government continues to back initiatives that boost income opportunities for those in need, in line with the 13th Malaysia Plan's strategy to strengthen third-sector resilience.

To further support these enterprises, the government plans to extend the income tax exemption application period until 2028.

"In addition, RM120 million has been allocated as matching grants for foundations, GLIC and GLC working with the government to address urban poverty, homelessness and support former shelter residents in achieving self-reliance.

"These initiatives reflect our commitment to ensure that no citizen is left behind."



WITH KEEN INTEREST ... Malaysians watching live the tabling of Budget 2026 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in Parliament yesterday. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

JS-SEZ recorded RM37.1b in approved investments

PETALING JAYA: The Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) recorded RM37.1 billion in approved investments in the first half of 2025, representing 66% of Johor's total investments and secured an additional RM29 billion in new investment commitments, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the federal government's continuous efforts to develop the JS-SEZ had strengthened investor confidence in Johor as Malaysia's strategic southern gateway, paving the way for deeper regional economic collaboration.

"Malaysia is positioning itself as a cross-border economic powerhouse by leveraging its strategic location and enhancing regional connectivity through border development and infrastructure integration," he said when tabling Budget 2026 in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Anwar, who is also Finance minister, said the government is equally committed to stimulating growth along the northern border through the Delapan Special Border Economic Zone in Bukit Kayu Hitam, Kedah, which has drawn up to RM2.7 billion in investments.

The area, he said, is emerging as a modern growth hub connecting supply chains and the Asean digital ecosystem.

He added that Malaysia is advancing the Asean Power Grid initiative to connect cross-border electricity networks and boost regional energy trade.

"Tenaga Nasional Berhad and Petronas are working with Asean partners to accelerate the Vietnam-Malaysia-Singapore project, which will channel renewable energy from southern Vietnam to Malaysia and Singapore."

Anwar said a 28km road from Kalabakan in Sabah to Simanggaris, Indonesia, will be constructed, while the Pasir Mas-Rantau Panjang railway track will be upgraded to enhance connectivity.

He also confirmed that the Johor Bahru-Singapore Rapid Transit System Link is on track to be fully operational by Jan 1, 2027, with the capacity to ferry up to 10,000 passengers per hour during peak periods.

Budget 2026 will be debated at the policy stage for eight days, followed by ministerial winding-up sessions from Oct 29 to Nov 4.

Highest development allocation for Sabah, Sarawak

PETALING JAYA: Sabah and Sarawak will receive the highest federal development allocations under Budget 2026, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said Sabah's development allocation will rise to RM6.9 billion from RM4.4 billion in 2022, while Sarawak's will increase to RM6 billion from RM2.9 billion in the same year.

"In the spirit of the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63), the Madani government is committed to accelerating development in Sabah and Sarawak. This is not merely a pledge, but a concrete effort to bridge the development gap, particularly in

basic infrastructure," Anwar said when tabling the Budget in Parliament yesterday.

Beginning this year, the Special Grant Rate for Sabah and Sarawak has been doubled to RM600 million, compared with the RM300 million in 2023.

Although the regulation of electricity supply was fully handed over to Sabah in January last year, Anwar said the federal government will continue to provide RM1.2 billion to ensure continuous power supply.

Following the Penampang landslide that disrupted electricity for 230,000 users on Sabah's east coast,

RM765 million has been allocated for the Southern Link Transmission Line Project to strengthen grid resilience.

Since 2024, the federal government has also set aside RM1 billion for water projects in Sabah, including new pipelines in Tawau and upgrades of old pipes in Kota Kinabalu, Penampang and Putatan, all scheduled for completion next year.

He said nine packages of the Pan Borneo Sarawak packages have been completed and opened to the public, while four packages under Pan Borneo Sabah Phase 1A are also finished.

For 2026, RM1.67 billion has been

allocated to continue the Pan Borneo Sabah project as planned.

The Sarawak-Sabah Link Road Phase 1 is expected to be completed by November 2026, with Phase 2 on track for mid-2029.

The Trans Borneo Highway project will further strengthen land connectivity between the two states, with tenders expected to be issued as early as the first quarter of 2026.

Additionally, RM350 million will be spent to upgrade pavement structures along the Red Line section between Durin and Salim in Sibul, Sarawak.

In total, all public infrastructure

projects in both states amount to RM48 billion.

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission will develop the Madani Submarine Cable System – a 3,190km, RM2 billion network linking Johor, Sarawak and Sabah.

Anwar said RM20 million has also been allocated to expand sites and trading spaces with basic facilities for small traders at Tamu Desa in Sabah and Sarawak, adding that he had met with leaders from all states to understand their development priorities, which were considered in planning the 13th Malaysia Plan.



Diringahayu

**TUAN YANG TERUTAMA YANG DI-PERTUA NEGERI SARAWAK
TUN PEHIN SRI DR. HAJI WAN JUNAIDI BIN TUANKU JAAFAR**

(S.M.N., S.B.S., P.S.M., P.N.B.S., D.G.S.M., P.J.N., J.S.M., J.B.S., P.B.S., P.P.J.I. (EMAS))

sempena

**SAMBUTAN PERAYAAN HARI LAHIR KE-79
TUAN YANG TERUTAMA YANG DI-PERTUA NEGERI SARAWAK**

pada

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Anwar: Do not question peace efforts for Palestine

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has urged all parties not to question the involvement of Malaysian activists in humanitarian missions to assist the people of Palestine, nor the visit of US President Donald Trump in conjunction with the Asean Summit at the end of this month.

He said as the international community focuses on finding a peaceful resolution, Malaysians should likewise root for the success of these efforts instead of fuelling unhealthy political debate.

"The entire world, including Egypt, Qatar and Hamas, is focused on ensuring the success of the peace process.

"So, we in Malaysia should do the same and pray for its success.

"Do not, for instance, oppose the visit by Trump, because we are appealing to all countries, including Trump himself, to ensure that this agreement is signed and implemented," he said after performing Friday prayers at Surau Fathurrahman PPAM Melinjau in Precinct 11 yesterday.

He joined about 500

➤ Prime minister calls on Malaysians to support humanitarian missions and avoid divisive political debate

worshippers in prayers led by Ustaz Khairul Anuar Mohd Saruwan.

Anwar said if Hamas itself was showing commitment towards peace, it would be inappropriate for any group in the country to create division.

"So, if even Hamas wants peace, why should we be the ones provoking conflict?"

"People are being killed, their homeland occupied, and innocent children and women continue to be murdered. We must first put an end to these atrocities," he added.

He also expressed appreciation to Malaysian volunteers participating in the humanitarian flotilla mission to Gaza, describing their courage as a great act of sacrifice.

"Not everyone is willing to risk their lives to help the people of

Gaza. To those who do, we extend our gratitude and prayers. This is the spirit that should be upheld among Muslims and all Malaysians," he said.

On the nine Malaysians who joined the humanitarian mission and were detained in Israel on Oct 8, Anwar said arrangements for their return were being coordinated with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Bernama reported.

"We are praying, God willing, that they will arrive safely in Istanbul," he said.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the government was actively pursuing efforts to secure the immediate and unconditional release of the nine Malaysian nationals and participants of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC) and Thousand

Madleens to Gaza (TMTG) mission.

It said efforts are also being carried out through Malaysian embassies in Amman and Ankara as well as through international legal teams to ensure consular access to the detained Malaysians and their swift, safe repatriation.

The ministry added that the government is mobilising these efforts in cooperation with friendly countries, particularly Turkiye.

"All nine Malaysians are reported to be in good health. The safety and welfare of all Malaysian citizens remain the utmost priority of the government," the statement read.

The FFC and TMTG humanitarian mission involved about 150 activists from 25 countries aboard nine ships, including the *Conscience* and *Umm Saad*, that were intercepted by Israeli forces on Oct 8 when they were less than 120 nautical miles from Gaza at 10.50am Malaysian time.

The activists were reportedly detained at Ketziot Prison in Negev, Israel.

Govt advocates full execution of Asean plan on Myanmar

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has underscored the need for the full and meaningful implementation of the Asean Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar, particularly the cessation of violence, scaling up of humanitarian aid and the pursuit of inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders in the country.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said this was conveyed during his courtesy call on Myanmar's Prime Minister and Union Minister of National Planning of State Security and Peace Commission U Nyo Saw in Naypyitaw.

"The upcoming elections in Myanmar were also discussed," he said in a Facebook post on Friday.

Mohamad added that the working visit was undertaken following the decision of the 58th Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July and carried out in his capacity as Asean Chair.

He departed for Myanmar on Thursday to hold discussions with his counterpart and the country's top leadership.

Myanmar has been mired in a protracted political and humanitarian crisis since the military ousted the democratically elected National Unity Government on Feb 1, 2021.

In April that year, Asean leaders held an emergency meeting and adopted the five-point consensus, which called for, among others, an immediate cessation of violence, constructive dialogue with all stakeholders to restore peace and stability, and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Myanmar. - Bernama

Labour market stable, unemployment rate at 3%

PUTRAJAYA: The labour market remained stable and resilient in August, supported by sustained economic growth and stronger labour participation, with the unemployment rate holding at 3% and the number of unemployed declining to 520,000, according to the figures from the Statistics Department.

Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the continued strong economic performance of the country had driven labour market stability, reflected in the steady rise in employment and a reduction in unemployment.

"The labour force further strengthened during the month, rising by 0.2% month-on-month to 17.51 million individuals (July 2025: 17.47 million), while the labour force participation rate edged up by 0.1 percentage points to 70.9% (July: 70.8%), signalling higher participation in the market," he said in a statement yesterday.

Mohd Uzir added that the number of employed individuals increased by 0.2% to 16.99 million (July: 16.95 million), while the number of unemployed declined by 0.3% to 520,000, reversing the previous month's slight increase (July: 521,600), keeping the unemployment rate steady at 3%.

Of the total employed, 74.9% were categorised as employees, up 0.2% to 12.73 million (July: 12.71 million), while the number of own-account workers edged up by 0.5% to 3.22 million (July: 3.21 million).

Across sectors, employment in services continued to record strong growth, particularly in wholesale



Mohd Uzir said the continued strong economic performance of the country had driven labour market stability, reflected in the steady rise in employment and a reduction in unemployment. - MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN

and retail trade, information and communication, and accommodation and food services.

Employment in manufacturing, construction, mining and quarrying and agriculture also posted gains.

"Malaysia's labour market is expected to remain resilient in the coming months, supported by stable economic growth, rising labour demand and the recovery of key sectors such as services and manufacturing.

"Overall, the labour market is on a strong trajectory and is anticipated to achieve its best performance in over a decade, provided the current positive momentum continues," he added. - Bernama

M'sia aims to be Asean cultural and creative hub

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia is determined to strengthen its role as a leading cultural and artistic hub in Asean, using art and creative exchange to deepen regional ties and drive socio-economic growth, said the prime minister's wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

She added that art and culture were not only reflections of national identity but also powerful diplomatic tools that build bridges and foster regional cooperation.

Speaking at the Asean-China Art Exchange Exhibition yesterday, Wan Azizah added that cultural exchanges held alongside the Asean Summit play a key role in strengthening Southeast Asia-China ties.

"Chairing Asean is our opportunity to steer Southeast Asia towards stability, dynamic growth and rich cultural exchange," she said.

"Let us unite, in our businesses, our communities and our cultural institutions, to make Malaysia's leadership a success for the entire region."

She added that artistic exchanges could serve as catalysts for international relations and bolster tourism. - Bernama

Govt acts to stem influenza spread

► Circular issued to schools and educational institutions on guidelines to manage outbreaks, curb infections

BY THE SUN TEAM
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PUTRAJAYA: The Education Ministry has issued an assurance that comprehensive preventive and control measures are being enforced at all schools and educational institutions to contain the spread of influenza-like illnesses following a surge in reported cases nationwide.

Education Director-General Dr Mohd Azam Ahmad said the ministry has issued a detailed circular outlining guidelines for schools to manage outbreaks effectively and systematically.

"The circular provides administrators with a clear framework to handle cases in an organised and effective manner," he said in a statement yesterday, adding that a reminder notice was distributed to all institutions through state education departments and district education offices on Oct 6.

Mohd Azam said the measures include advising individuals showing

symptoms to seek immediate medical attention and isolating symptomatic hostel students in a sick bay while awaiting their parents or guardians to take them home.

He said students exhibiting flu-like symptoms are encouraged to rest at home or remain in their hostels, and avoid crowded areas to prevent infections.

"Members of the school community are also urged to wear face masks when interacting with others or in public places," he said, adding that schools have been told to intensify awareness programmes on hygiene and educate parents on their role in curbing the spread of the virus.

He stressed that maintaining cleanliness and vigilance is crucial, particularly in communal settings such as hostels, canteens and classrooms.

He added that the ministry was working closely with the Health Ministry Disease Control Division to monitor developments and ensure the health and wellbeing of students,



The Health Ministry on Thursday reported 97 clusters of influenza A and B infections, with the majority originating from educational institutions. – MASRY CHE ANI/THE SUN

teachers and the wider education community.

The Health Ministry on Thursday reported 97 clusters of influenza A and B infections during

Epidemiological Week 40/2025, a sharp rise from 14 clusters the previous week, with the majority originating from educational institutions.

The increase has prompted authorities to heighten surveillance and remind the public to seek early treatment, maintain good hygiene and stay home when unwell.

Police quiz mother over death of toddler

KUCHING: Police have recorded a statement from the mother of a three-year-old girl who was allegedly fatally abused at Kampung Rampangi in Santubong on Tuesday.

Sarawak police commissioner Datuk Mohamad Zainal Abdullah said the 37-year-old woman has not been detained, as the investigation is ongoing.

"We have only recorded the mother's statement to assist with the investigation, and there is no need to detain her at this point," he said after the Sarawak Police Commissioner's monthly assembly at the Sarawak Contingent Police Headquarters yesterday.

He added that police are probing the relationship between the woman and a 32-year-old male suspect, who has been remanded to assist with the investigation.

"We believe they are acquainted, but the exact nature of their relationship is still under investigation. They could be just friends or possibly in a romantic relationship.

"We will let you know, but they are certainly not married."

Mohamad Zainal said the man was arrested within 24 hours of the incident, and a urine test confirmed he was positive for drug abuse.

He said a post-mortem on the victim has been conducted, adding that the case would be investigated thoroughly.

Checks revealed that the suspect has six criminal records related to drugs. – Bernama

Date set for appeal against acquittal of Syed Saddiq

KUALA LUMPUR: The Federal Court yesterday set Dec 11 and 12 to hear the prosecution appeal against the acquittal of Muar MP Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman from charges of criminal breach of trust, misappropriation of property and money laundering involving Angkatan Bersatu Anak Muda (Armada) funds.

DPP Datuk Wan Shahrudin Wan Ladin said both dates were set by deputy registrars Wan Fatimah Zaharah Wan Yusoff and Mahyun Yusoff during online case management proceedings yesterday.

"The relevant parties need to file their submissions before Nov 26 and

the court also set Nov 27 for case management," said Wan Shahrudin when contacted.

The proceedings were also attended by lawyer Datuk Hisyam Teh Poh Teik, representing Syed Saddiq.

On June 25, a three-judge panel of the Court of Appeal comprising justices Datuk Ahmad Zaidi Ibrahim, Datuk Azman Abdullah and Datuk Noorin Badaruddin acquitted and discharged Syed Saddiq after allowing his appeal to set aside his conviction and sentence of seven years' imprisonment, two strokes of the cane and a fine of RM10 million imposed by the Kuala Lumpur High Court on Nov 9, 2023.

On June 26, the Attorney General's Chambers filed an appeal in the Federal Court against the decision and the prosecution filed an appeal petition on Sept 22.

Syed Saddiq, 32, was charged with abetting with former assistant treasurer of Armada, Rafiq Hakim Razali, in committing criminal breach of trust of RM1 million of Armada funds at CIMB Bank Berhad, KL Sentral on March 6, 2020 under Section 406 of the Penal Code, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment, caning and a fine.

He was also charged with misappropriating RM120,000 belonging to Armada Bumi Bersatu

Enterprise under Section 403 of the Penal Code, which carries a jail sentence of between six months and five years, whipping and a fine.

In addition, the former Youth and Sports minister was also accused of committing two money laundering transactions by transferring RM50,000 each to his Amanah Saham Bumiputera account.

The charge was framed under Section 4(1)(b) of the Prevention of Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001, which provides a maximum jail sentence of 15 years and a fine of five times the value involved. – Bernama

9,500 cops to be deployed for Sabah polls

KUALA LUMPUR: Police will be deploying some 9,500 personnel to ensure smooth conduct of the Sabah election.

Inspector-General of Police Datuk Seri Mohd Khalid Ismail said the deployment will cover all 73 state assembly seats to be contested.

"(We are) tasked with securing over 3,500 polling stations and ensuring the safety of voters throughout the election process," he said after attending the Passing-Out

Parade of the Probationary Inspector Basic Police Training at the Police Training Centre yesterday.

The event featured 345 probationary inspectors who completed nine months of basic police training.

Mohd Khalid said police are still awaiting the official announcement from the Election Commission on the date of the polls.

He added that the vast area and challenging terrain in Sabah

necessitate special logistical arrangements, including the use of helicopters for personnel mobilisation.

"Officer deployment is critical, and Bukit Aman will provide the necessary support. To date, Sabah police have requested an additional 1,000 to 1,500 personnel for mobilisation."

On Budget 2026, he expressed gratitude to the government for its commitment to the welfare of the

public, including members of security forces.

"The police force, as public servants, receives a range of benefits, particularly improvements in salary scales, technology, logistics, housing and other operational requirements.

"We hope the government would continue to focus on strengthening the capabilities of the force, including supplying advanced equipment that meets current operational demands," he said. – Bernama

Man searching for clams drowns after falling into river

IPOH: A man who reportedly fell into Sungai Tuntung near Pantai Remis on Thursday evening while searching for clams has been found drowned.

Perak Fire and Rescue Department acting operations chief Shazlean Mohd Hanafia said the victim,

Mohamad Zulkifli Mat Saad, 27, was found about 10m from the spot where he was reported to have fallen.

"The search operation resumed at 11.15pm after the river level began to recede, with the search area extending about one kilometre from

where the victim fell.

"The operation involved two boats and eight personnel, including four members of the Water Rescue Team," he said in a statement yesterday.

He added that the rescue team was also assisted by residents who carried

out searches on foot through the nearby mangrove area.

"At about 11.30pm, the victim was found in the area and brought out through a land route and his body was handed to police for further action." – Bernama

BY JOSHUA CHANG
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KOTA KINABALU: Sabah's conservation efforts received a major boost on Oct 2 when a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was exchanged under the Orangutan Diplomacy Programme at the Sungai Pin Conservation Area (SPnCA) in Kinabatangan.

The MoU was previously signed by the Malaysian Palm Oil Green Conservation Foundation (MPOGCF) and Borneo Samudera Sdn Bhd (BSSB), a subsidiary of Sawit Kinabalu Group. It was formally exchanged at a ceremony officiated by Plantation and Commodities Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Yusran Shah Mohd Yusof and Sawit Kinabalu Managing Director Datuk Victor Ationg.

In his speech, Yusran, who is also MPOGCF Board of Trustees chairman, described the programme as crucial to ensure orangutans can move freely in their natural habitat without disturbance from human activities, plantation operations or uncontrolled tourism.

He highlighted that the MoU was especially timely following Unesco's recognition of Kinabatangan as Malaysia's newest Biosphere Reserve on Sept 27.

"This effort reflects Malaysia's seriousness in safeguarding its wildlife while balancing sustainable development," he said.

Yusran also commended Sawit Kinabalu for allocating 2,632 hectares in Sungai Pin Estate as a High Conservation Value (HCV) area, home to an estimated 55 orangutans.

He noted that a population study conducted with MPOGCF and NGO Hutan would soon provide updated figures on the orangutan population in Sabah, currently estimated at between 10,000 and 11,000.

To support the Orangutan Diplomacy initiative, he also announced a special RM20,000 allocation from MPOGCF.

Orangutan diplomacy to strengthen conservation

➤ Sungai Pin Conservation Area a 'hidden gem' in need of protection



(From left) Mojilis, Ationg, Yusran, Hairulazim and Belvinder during the MoU signing ceremony.

"This collaboration not only strengthens the conservation agenda but also enhances the credibility of Malaysia's palm oil industry, which is committed to biodiversity protection,"

he added.

SPnCA, described as a "hidden gem" in Kinabatangan, is managed under the SPnCA Conservation Area Management Plan.

Meanwhile, Ationg credited strong support from the ministry and partners to help create lasting impact for the environment, local communities and the palm oil sector.

He said the conservation area represents a flagship initiative showing that oil palm development can coexist with biodiversity protection, community empowerment and ecotourism.

"SPnCA is a living testament to Sabah's potential as a global model for sustainable palm oil landscapes.

"The Orangutan Diplomacy initiative carries a powerful message that when industry, government and communities work together, we can protect wildlife such as the orangutan while also ensuring the well-being of people and the long-term sustainability of the industry," he said.

Through its Conservation and Biodiversity Unit, BSSB manages SPnCA as part of Sawit Kinabalu's wider sustainability agenda.

The MoU, Ationg explained, would strengthen collaboration between industry players and conservation bodies, enhancing wildlife protection while reinforcing Sabah's role as a leader in sustainable palm oil production.

Also present were Malaysian Palm Oil Council (MPOC) Chief Executive Officer Belvinder Sron, SKG Green Chief Executive Officer Philipa Datuk Wilfred Mojilis, and MPOGCF General Manager Hairulazim Mahmud.

Charitable body conducts fund-raising

IPOH: The Salvation Army Ipoh, a non-profit organisation which relies on donations and grants for its operations, has had to grapple with rising costs of late.

To help sustain its coffers, the home organised an open day to raise funds at its children's home at Jalan Kampar here on Sept 20.

The funds were raised through the sales of coupons to purchase food at the stalls.

Team leader for its Ipoh centres Mejar T. Chelvie said its water bills have risen drastically all of a sudden.

"In April and May the bill came up to RM354.15 but then shot up to RM1,026.40 for June and July.

"For the months of August and September it reads RM1,126.70," she said.

Perak Water Board customers are billed once in two months.

"We have written a letter to the board

for an explanation and are still waiting for a reply."

She noted that there are still donors and good souls who contribute to the home's maintenance.

Financial aid is needed to run its three homes and a centre for community activities and programmes in Ipoh.

These include residential care centres for children and youths, and a home for the aged.

There are currently 75 occupants in the three homes.

"We need RM500,000 a year to pay salaries of staff, bills and others," she said.

"We receive an annual grant from the state government which is not a fixed amount.

The home has to submit details of what is needed to have the allocation, she added.

— By **P. CHANDRA SAGARAN**



Tan presenting a carton of drinking water to Rohaizat. — **P. CHANDRA SAGARAN/THE SUN**

Aid preparation for expected floods

By **P. CHANDRA SAGARAN**
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IPOH: With heavy floods expected in the next few months, 12 Lions Club organisations in Perak are taking proactive measures to supply necessities to the State Civil Defence Force.

Provisions are being readied to supply immediate assistance to victims before they are shifted to flood relief centres.

The effort was initiated by the Lions Club of Perak Silver State which donated necessities, including drinking water, ready-to-eat dry food like biscuits, and hygiene sets consisting of towels, soaps, toothbrushes and toothpastes.

The items were delivered to the Civil Defence Force office here on October 2. The director of the force Kol Rohaizat Hadli received them from the club.

Present were Lions Clubs District 308B2 Governor Tan Say Cheong and presidents and representatives of the clubs involved.

Rohaizat also presented appreciation certificates to representatives of the clubs.

Club Region 5 chairperson Dr Richard Ng said the action plan is to reach affected areas, especially those marked as "red zones" which would likely be inaccessible during flooding.

He noted that the agency's staff would be able

to reach the victims to distribute the items.

This is to ease the victims' burden before they are evacuated if such a need arises.

Ng explained that the agency had approached the club for assistance.

"We are responding to their appeal. In fact, more clubs wanted to donate after Sept 25, the target date. We stopped at 12 clubs and will wait for the agency's appeal if there is an increase in the number of flood victims.

"We managed to bring in 200 cartons of drinking water, 1,000 hygiene sets and 1,000 packets of food items which are sufficient for now," he said.

Meanwhile, Rohaizat said the Department of Irrigation and Drainage has identified 280 locations as "hotspots" vulnerable to floods in 12 districts in the state.

"The monsoon transition phase began from Sept 30 and the North East Monsoon is expected to start from November until March next year.

"The State Civil Defence Force had trained 890 personnel who are ready to be mobilised in areas affected by floods," he added.

Rohaizat commended the Lions clubs who have contributed to the cause. "It is vital for all quarters to forge strategic partnership to face natural disasters," he said.



Students from SJK (C) Shen Jai set up a food stall to raise funds for the Salvation Army.

Israel ratifies ceasefire, hostage deal

➤ Move to be enforced within 24 hours of govt approval

JERUSALEM: Israel's government ratified a ceasefire with the Palestinian militant group Hamas yesterday, clearing the way to suspend hostilities in Gaza within 24 hours and free Israeli hostages held there within 72 hours after that. The Israeli Cabinet approved the deal approximately 24 hours after mediators announced the agreement, which calls for the release of Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners and the start of a phased withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza under US President Donald Trump's initiative to end the two-year war.

"The government has just now approved the framework for the release of all of the hostages, the living and the deceased," said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on social media.

The war has deepened Israel's international isolation and upended the Middle East, having evolved into a regional conflict that has drawn in Iran, Yemen and Lebanon.

It also tested the US-Israeli relationship, with Trump seeming to lose patience with Netanyahu and

pressuring him to reach a deal.

Israelis and Palestinians alike rejoiced after the deal was announced, the biggest step yet to end two years of war in which over 67,000 Palestinians have been killed, and return the last hostages seized by Hamas in the attacks that started the assault.

Exiled Hamas Gaza chief Khalil Al-Hayya said he had received guarantees from the United States and other mediators that the war was over.

An Israeli government spokesperson said the ceasefire would go into force within 24 hours of government approval of the deal. After that 24-hour period, the hostages held in Gaza would be freed within 72 hours.

Twenty Israeli hostages are still believed to be alive in Gaza, while 26 are presumed dead, and the fate of two is unknown.

Hamas has indicated that recovering the bodies of the dead may take longer than releasing those who are alive.

Once the agreement is operating, trucks carrying food and medical aid would be able to enter Gaza to help civilians, hundreds of thousands of whom have been sheltering in tents after Israeli forces destroyed their homes and razed cities.

The accord, if fully implemented, would bring the two sides closer than any previous effort to halt the

war.

A Palestinian source said even after the deal was signed, the list of hundreds of Palestinians to be released was not finalised.

The group is seeking freedom for some of the most prominent Palestinian convicts held in Israeli jails, as well as hundreds of people detained during Israel's assault.

Further steps in Trump's 20-point plan have yet to be discussed. Those include how the shattered Gaza Strip is to be ruled when the fighting ends and the ultimate fate of Hamas,

which has so far rejected Israel's demands it disarm.

Netanyahu also faces scepticism from within his governing coalition, as many have long opposed any deal with Hamas.

Israeli Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said he would vote to bring down the government if Hamas is not dismantled.

But the announcement of an end to fighting and return of hostages was greeted with jubilation.

"Thank God for the ceasefire, the end of bloodshed and killing," said

Abdul Majeed Abd Rabbo in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. "All of the Gaza Strip is happy, all the Arab people and the world is happy with the ceasefire and the end of bloodshed."

Einav Zaugauker, whose son Matan is one of the last hostages, rejoiced in Tel Aviv's so-called Hostages Square, where families of those seized in the Hamas attack that triggered the war two years ago have long assembled.

"I cannot breathe. I cannot explain what I'm feeling. It's crazy."

In Gaza, Israeli attacks continued before the official start of the ceasefire, but there were fewer fatalities than the scores killed on a daily basis in recent weeks.

Local health authorities reported seven dead in two separate Israeli strikes on Thursday.

Trump said he would head to the region on Sunday to possibly attend a signing ceremony in Egypt, and Israeli Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana invited him to address the legislative body, which would be the first such speech by a US president since 2008. The deal received support from Arab and Western countries.

Completion of the deal would mark a significant accomplishment for the Republican president, who has struggled to deliver on his promises to bring peace to the Gaza conflict and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. - Reuters



Palestinian children celebrate at a camp in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip following news of the ceasefire deal. - AFP/IC

Missile, drone attacks cut power in Kyiv

KYIV: The Ukrainian capital was plunged into darkness yesterday by what the air force called a "massive attack", as Russia pummelled Kyiv's infrastructure, cutting off water and energy supplies.

The Kremlin has escalated aerial attacks on Ukrainian energy facilities and rail systems over recent weeks, mirroring similar campaigns launched over the previous three winters that left people without heating in frigid temperatures.

"The capital of the country is under an enemy ballistic missile attack and a massive attack by the enemy strike drones," the Ukrainian air force said, urging people in Kyiv to remain in shelters.

Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Russian forces had targeted "critical infrastructure" and wounded at least nine people, five of whom were taken to hospital.

"The left bank of the capital is without electricity. There are also problems with water supply."

Ukrainian Energy Minister Svitlana Grynchuk said Russian forces were "inflicting a massive strike" on the grid.

"Energy workers are taking all necessary measures to minimise the

negative consequences."

"As soon as security conditions allow, energy workers will begin clarifying the consequences of the attack and restoration work."

Fearing an incoming hypersonic Kinzhal missile, which are harder to detect and intercept, Ukraine put the entire country on alert on Friday.

Military administration head Ivan Fedorov said Russia also hit the southeastern region Zaporizhzhia with at least seven overnight drone strikes, killing a seven-year-old and wounding at least three people.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Thursday that Moscow was seeking to "create chaos and apply psychological pressure" through crippling energy facilities and railways.

He said Russian attacks this year have strained Ukrainian gas infrastructure, and more strikes could force his country to ramp up imports.

He also said Ukraine has stepped up its drone and missile strikes on Russian territory, a tactic that is showing "results" and pushing up fuel prices in Russia.

A Ukrainian hit on a power station in the Russian region of Belgorod also caused power outages.

Russia accused Ukraine on Thursday of rupturing a now-defunct pipeline near the frontline used to transport ammonia into Ukraine for export, releasing toxic gas.

It posted a video showing what appeared to be clouds of a chemical compound spewing from a source in the ground.

Authorities in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region said the incident did not present a "menace to the lives of people" living nearby.

Citing a recent uptick in Russian drone attacks, Ukrainian authorities ordered the evacuation of Kramatorsk, a large civilian hub in the Donetsk region under Kyiv's control.

In Sloviansk, another Donbas city under Ukrainian control, the mayor advised children and elderly people to leave, citing incessant attacks on the energy system.

Ukrainian authorities said Russia is deploying first-person-view drones that have changed the character of fighting across the front line.

A Ukrainian delegation led by Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko is expected to visit the United States next week to discuss energy and air defence under intensifying Russian strikes. - AFP

Efforts mount to end war in Ukraine

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Thursday Washington and Nato allies were "stepping up the pressure" to end the war in Ukraine, after his outreach to Russia's Vladimir Putin failed to achieve a ceasefire.

"Yeah, we are stepping up the pressure," he said in the Oval Office during a meeting with Finnish President Alexander Stubb, in which

Trump was asked by a reporter if he would increase efforts for a deal.

"We're stepping it up together. We're all stepping it up. Nato has been great."

Trump this week brokered a peace deal in Gaza between Israel and Hamas, but has said that the war sparked by Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine was proving harder to solve.

He hosted Putin in Alaska in August but failed to achieve a breakthrough, and since then Russia's attacks on Ukraine have escalated.

Russia said on Wednesday momentum towards reaching a peace deal in Ukraine had largely vanished following the meeting. - AFP

'Flotilla movement to continue'

GUARULHOS: Brazilian activist Thiago Avila, one of the main organisers of the international aid flotilla to Gaza, said on Thursday the movement to get life-saving relief to the devastated Palestinian enclave would continue, after a ceasefire was announced between Israel and Hamas.

"There is nothing in the ceasefire agreements to indicate that the illegal blockade of Gaza by Israel, the United States or any other nation would end.

"As long as there is no justice for the Palestinian people, the flotilla will continue."

Avila was one of 13 Brazilians aboard the Global Sumud Flotilla of 45 vessels intercepted by Israel last week.

Israel detained and deported more than 470 people aboard the boats, including Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg.

Israel has blocked several international aid flotillas in recent months from reaching Gaza, where the United Nations says famine has set

in after two years of a devastating Israeli military offensive.

Israel has slashed the amount of humanitarian aid allowed into the enclave while the war has raged.

Several activists on board the flotilla reported mistreatment in detention, which Israel denied.

"Obviously, there were violations that would be the subject of complaints in international courts, but they are nothing compared to what the Palestinians are suffering."

He reported cases of "physical violence" and "forced interrogations".

"Diabetics have gone three days without access to insulin."

Israel and Hamas on Thursday agreed to a ceasefire deal after more than two years of war sparked by Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel.

Israel's retaliatory campaign has reduced much of Gaza to rubble, including schools, hospitals and basic infrastructure, and killed at least 67,194 people, according to the territory's health ministry. - AFP

US troops to monitor Gaza truce

WASHINGTON: Senior US officials on Thursday said a military team of 200 people will be deployed in the Middle East to "oversee" the Gaza ceasefire between Israel and Hamas after a peace deal brokered by President Donald Trump.

An official said US military Central Command head Admiral Brad Cooper "will initially have 200 people on the ground. His role will be to oversee, observe, make sure there are no violations".

He also said Egyptian, Qatari, Turkish and possibly Emirati military officials would be embedded in the team. A second official said "no US

troops are intended to go into Gaza."

"The notion is to make it collegial. And the Israelis will obviously be in touch with them," the first official said.

"Putting Admiral Cooper in the room gave a lot of confidence and security to the Arab countries.

"And therefore it was passed on to Hamas that we were taking a very strong role, or the president was taking a very strong position in standing behind his guarantees."

The second official said the team was intended "to help create a joint control centre and then integrate other security forces that would be there to deconflict". - AFP



Malaysia to observe election: Myanmar junta

YANGNON: Myanmar's junta said yesterday Malaysia would send observation teams to its long-delayed election, as it battles multiple rebel forces opposed to the polls.

A civil war has consumed Myanmar since the military snatched power in a 2021 coup, jailing democratic figurehead Aung San Suu Kyi and deposing her civilian government.

The military has touted elections, due to start in phases on Dec 28, as a path to reconciliation.

However, monitors are slating the polls as a ploy to legitimise continuing military rule, while it is set to be boycotted by many ousted lawmakers and blocked by armed opposition groups in enclaves they control.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan arrived in capital Naypyidaw on Thursday to meet with Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.

State-run *Global New Light of Myanmar* said yesterday Mohamad Hasan "vowed to send election observation teams to Myanmar". – AFP

North Korea hails ties with China

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un hailed "friendly and cooperative" ties with China as he hosted Premier Li Qiang and other foreign dignitaries for celebrations marking 80 years under the ruling Workers' Party, state news agency KCNA reported yesterday.

China is North Korea's most important ally, although relations have at times been strained by Pyongyang's nuclear programme.

The military parade showcased North Korea's latest weaponry, including intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The celebrations came as Kim has been emboldened by the war in Ukraine, securing critical support from Russia after sending thousands of North Korean troops to fight alongside Moscow's forces. – AFP

Authorities inspect a collapsed wall and a damaged vehicle outside a mall in Butuan City, on the southern island of Mindanao after the quake. – AFPPIC



7.4 magnitude quake strikes off southern Philippines

Coastal residents advised to evacuate

DAVAO: A 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck off the southern Philippines on Friday, triggering *tsunami* warnings in the Asian nation as well as neighbouring Indonesia and Palau.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) said the quake hit about 20km from Manay in the Mindanao region at 9.43am (0143 GMT).

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said

"destructive *tsunami* is expected with life-threatening wave heights" on the archipelago nation's east coast, adding that coastal residents in these areas "are strongly advised to immediately evacuate to higher grounds or move farther inland".

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said waves of up to three metres were forecast for threatened areas in the Philippines and up to a metre-high waves in Palau and Indonesia.

Police officer Dianne Lacorda said although there were no immediate reports of casualties, the province of Davao Oriental, which includes Manay, expects damage.

"Our tumblers on the table were moving and falling," she said, adding that power and communication lines have been cut and the authorities are currently unable to assess the potential damage in some areas.

Christine Sierte, a teacher in the town of Compostela near Manay, said she was in the middle of an online meeting when the violent shaking started.

"It was very slow at first then it got stronger. That was the longest (moment) of my life. We weren't able to walk out of the building immediately because the shaking was so strong.

"The ceilings of some offices

fell, but luckily no one was injured," she said, although some of the school's 1,000-odd students "suffered panic attacks and difficulty in breathing".

Kath Cortez, a journalist based in Davao city to the west of Manay, said the ground floor walls of her family's house showed cracks.

"I was surprised by the strength. I had just woken up and was about to take a shower," she said, adding that her family members ran out of the house.

Earthquakes are a near-daily occurrence in the Philippines, which is situated on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", a zone of intense seismic activity. – AFP

Taiwan to expedite air defence system

TAIPEI: Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te yesterday vowed to speed up construction of a multi-layered air defence system as part of efforts to counter "enemy threats".

Lai's government has been under pressure from the United States to improve its ability to defend itself against a potential attack by China, which claims the island is part of its territory.

"We will accelerate our building of the T-Dome, establish an air defence system in Taiwan with multi-layered defence, high-level detection and effective interception," Lai said during Taiwan's National Day celebrations.

He added that Taiwan was determined to "maintain peace through strength" and called on China to "renounce the use of force or coercion to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait".

His speech followed a bruising year for the president, a staunch

defender of Taiwan's sovereignty who is loathed by Beijing.

A failed effort this year to unseat dozens of opposition lawmakers, which could have given Lai's Democratic Progressive Party a majority in the parliament, left the government weakened.

US tariffs on Taiwanese shipments and doubts over President Donald Trump's willingness to protect the island have also eroded confidence in the key relationship.

Lai reiterated yesterday plans to ramp up defence spending to more than 3% of gross domestic product next year and 5% by 2030, "showing our determination to safeguard the nation".

"We will advance the integration of high-tech and AI technologies to build a smart defence combat system, maximising effective deterrence for our strategy."

He also said Taiwan would boost its own defence industry and

strengthen domestic supply chains to build a "robust line of defence".

The celebrations mark the 114th anniversary of the toppling of China's Qing Dynasty and the subsequent founding of the Republic of China.

The current dispute between China and Taiwan dates back to a civil war between the nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek, who retreated to the island, and Mao Zedong's communist fighters.

Beijing launched military drills around Taiwan after Lai's National Day speech last year, sending planes and ships to encircle the island.

University of Nottingham China and Taiwan expert Jonathan Sullivan said China would not need to respond "aggressively" this time given Lai was "suffering right now".

Trump is expected to meet with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in the coming weeks as the rival superpowers thrash out a trade deal that could impact Taiwan. – AFP

Singapore, New Zealand sign trade and security agreement

WELLINGTON: New Zealand and Singapore yesterday signed a comprehensive strategic partnership (CSP), with their prime ministers pledging to continue to find ways to work together to maintain the international rules-based order at a time of growing tensions. The two countries have maintained political ties for 60 years, and in 2019 signed an enhanced partnership agreement that covered trade and economics, defence and security and supply chains.

"Singapore is one of our closest partners. As small states, it is important we work side-by-side to keep trade open, strengthen security and defend the rules-based order," New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said in a statement following the signing of the agreement.

"Through the CSP, we have committed to tackling the next

generation of challenges together, from supply chain resilience and digital trade to climate change and maritime security."

The two countries also concluded an agreement on trade in essential supplies, formalising an arrangement that began during the Covid-19 pandemic, when air freight continued between the two countries despite few passengers on flights.

Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong yesterday said the legally binding agreement meant both governments had committed to not imposing export restrictions, even during times of crisis, on some key products such as medicine and other essential supplies.

"I think that is an agreement that would give assurance to both our countries and to both our peoples that in times of need, we will always be there for one another." – Reuters



Call to support RTO and BTS housing schemes

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is encouraging financial institutions to support the implementation of rent-to-own (RTO) and the build-then-sell (BTS) housing schemes, in line with the aspirations of the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said that for first-time homebuyers, the government plans to extend the full stamp duty exemption on transfer instruments and loan agreements for the purchase of first homes priced not exceeding RM500,000 for another two years, until Dec 31, 2027.

The government also plans to impose a flat stamp duty rate of between 4% and 8% on property transfer instruments for residential units purchased by non-citizens and foreign companies, except for individuals who are permanent residents in Malaysia.

"This will ensure that the real estate market remains competitive, while curbing excessive house price increases for the benefit of the people," Anwar said. — Bernama

Move to strengthen export ecosystem

KUALA LUMPUR: Budget 2026 will strengthen the export ecosystem and support new market exploration, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

Anwar said *Syarikat Jaminan Pembiayaan Perniagaan Bhd* (SJPP) will provide a guarantee of up to 70% financing for export-oriented mid-tier companies, including those expanding into new markets, with a guarantee value of up to RM5 billion.

He said the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation's market development grant also allocates RM60 million to facilitate MSMEs in exporting Malaysian-made products to existing and new markets, including Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Additionally, Exim Bank will provide soft loans to assist companies affected by global trade tariff tensions with RM500 million funding. — Bernama

It's fiscally conservative and cautious: Economists

PETALING JAYA: Budget 2026 is fiscally conservative, as the government juggles limited fiscal space, investment in long-term capacity building and short-term cushioning for vulnerable sectors, according to economists.

BIMB Securities chief economist Imran Nurginias Ibrahim said the Budget comes across as a rather cautious and politically constrained plan.

"While the government highlights fiscal prudence and a modest narrowing of the deficit, the overall tone feels defensive rather than transformative," he told *SunBiz*.

After missing opportunities to pursue deeper structural reforms in 2024 and 2025, Imran said, the government now faces tighter fiscal space and the pressures of impending elections, starting with Sabah later this year.

"As a result, the government has opted for a more cautious approach, adjusting development spending to keep the fiscal deficit within target."

At its core, Imran said, the Budget attempts to balance maintaining growth momentum and managing fiscal discipline, but it lacks bold policy shifts or new growth catalysts. "The measures announced lean towards short-term social protection and continuity rather than strategic reforms that could lift Malaysia's long-term competitiveness."

OCBC senior Asean economist Lavanya Venkateswaran said Budget 2026 signals a steadying of the fiscal ship, with the government maintaining a cautious pace of consolidation while balancing social and economic priorities

"The government doubled down on fiscal consolidation, aiming to

➤ Govt attempts to balance maintaining growth momentum and managing financial discipline



narrow the deficit to 3.5% of GDP in 2026 from 3.8% in 2025. This is in line with our expectations and reflects a modest pace of consolidation," she said.

She noted that the government's macro assumptions were "fairly realistic", with real GDP growth projected at 4.0-4.5% (OCBC: 3.8%) and headline inflation at 1.3-2.0% (OCBC: 1.5%).

"Tax revenue collections are expected to grow broadly in line with nominal GDP, while non-tax revenues will likely contract due to lower global commodity prices and reduced dividends from Petronas," she said.

New tax measures include higher excise duties on cigarettes and alcoholic beverages from November 2025 and the introduction of a carbon tax targeting iron, steel and energy sectors, both of which were anticipated, she added.

Central government expenditure is forecast to rise modestly next year, led by higher emoluments and pensions. Subsidy and social assistance spending is expected to fall 14.2% year-on-year in 2026 as the government continues rationalisation efforts, though cash aid

programmes such as *Rahmah Cash Contribution* and *Sumbangan Asas Rahmah* will remain in place.

Lavanya said the Budget also highlights measures to bolster medium-term growth, including support for SMEs expanding abroad, regional development in Johor, Sabah and Sarawak, local tourism, and higher value-added manufacturing in sectors such as electronics.

"As such, although the fiscal support to economic growth from Budget 2026 is largely neutral, Budget 2026 affirms the government's commitment to pushing ahead with reforms and building domestic economic resilience to counter building external headwinds," she said.

Monash University Malaysia School of Business Senior Lecturer Dr Andrew Woon said although Malaysia's 2026 budget is smaller in size, the government's focus on human capital and high-technology industries underscored its intent to future-proof the economy.

He pointed out the allocation for Technical and Vocational Education and Training has been raised to RM7.9 billion from RM7.5 billion in 2025, reflecting efforts to strengthen skills in sectors such as electric vehicles, semiconductors and renewable energy under the New Industrial Master Plan.

"The Human Resource Development Corp will provide RM3 billion to fund three million training

opportunities, while the Skills Development Fund Corp will offer RM650 million in financing for over 25,000 trainees," Woon said.

He added that the Skills Development Department will receive RM34 million to roll out the Industry Academy Programme, aimed at reducing reliance on low-skilled foreign workers.

"Together, these measures reflect a cohesive strategy to build local expertise and strengthen Malaysia's position in the global digital and green economy," he said.

Meanwhile, economist Jason Loh Seong Wei said the government should offer temporary tax cuts to small and SMEs to cushion the impact of the expected Trump administration tariffs and China's deflationary pressures.

China's ongoing deflation, reinforced by weak oil and petrochemical prices, and softer US demand would expose export-oriented SMEs to "twin pressures" of reduced demand and stiffer competition, Loh told *SunBiz*.

Loh proposed lowering the 17% tax on chargeable income of up to RM600,000 for SMEs with paid-up capital of not more than RM2.5 million and annual sales below RM50 million to 14%.

For the same group, the 15% tax on the first RM150,000 should be reduced to 9%, while the 24% rate on income above RM600,000 should be lowered to 20%, he said.

"The tax cuts should run for one year, from 2026-2027 and to be extended for another year if necessary (that is, under Budget 2027)," he added.

— by HAYATUN RAZAK

More Reports: Page 12

Matching incentive for gig, e-hailing, p-hailing workers

KUALA LUMPUR: Gig, e-hailing and p-hailing workers will receive matching contribution incentives of up to RM600 per year, or RM6,000 for life, under the i-Saraan Plus scheme, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar said the incentives are being introduced to strengthen social protection and encourage contributions to the Employees Provident Fund, as many self-employed individuals are unable to make regular contributions for their own financial security.

He added that the existing i-Saraan scheme will also continue for other informal and self-employed individuals, with matching contributions of up to RM500 per year, or RM5,000 for life.

"The Gig Workers Act 2025 has made Social Security Organisation (Socso) contributions mandatory for gig workers," he said.

Anwar said the government has agreed to bear 70% of the Self-Employment Social Security Scheme contributions for gig workers in the non-mandated sector who register for the first time, while the incentive will be 50% in the second year.

"Job seekers or new graduates who accept job offers and need to relocate will receive incentives of up to RM1,000 from the Socso," he said.

Socso has also increased the maximum rate for haemodialysis treatment to RM170, compared to RM150 previously, involving RM52 million more per year.

"Socso will also complete the construction of rehabilitation centres in Malacca, Perak, Terengganu and, most recently, in Penang, which will have a capacity of 250 beds," he said.

For mothers, the eligibility age for the i-Suri scheme has been raised to 60 years. — Bernama



Many self-employed individuals are unable to make regular contributions for their own financial security. — BERNAMAPIC

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Brewers regret 10% alcohol excise duty hike

PETALING JAYA: The Confederation of Malaysian Brewers Bhd (CMBB) expressed regret over the government's decision to raise excise duty on alcohol by 10%, emphasising that Malaysia already has one of the highest beer excise rates globally.

The tax hike resulted in a new rate of RM192.50 per 100% volume per litre, especially given the current economic challenges and the pressures already faced by the food and beverage industry.

CMBB highlighted that any increase will widen the price gap between legitimate and illicit beer.

"This will pose a threat to government revenue collection, the industry and consumers. Higher beer excise duties are correlated with an increase in the availability of illicit beer," it said in a statement yesterday.

CMBB also noted that the industry estimates that around 25% of beer consumed locally is illicit, resulting in a loss of RM1.2 billion in tax revenue each year. This loss is expected to grow as excise rates rise.

"The beer industry will continue to support the Royal Malaysian Customs Department and the government's Multi-Agency Task

Force in their ongoing efforts to curb illicit beer and to protect government revenue.

"Addressing this challenge requires a balanced, collaborative approach – combining enforcement, awareness, and partnership between industry and authorities," CMBB said.

The brewing industry remains a key contributor to Malaysia's economy, generating RM7.1 billion annually, contributing RM3.3 billion in tax revenue, and supporting over 52,000 jobs across manufacturing, logistics, retail, and hospitality sectors.

Carlsberg Brewery Malaysia Bhd and Heineken Malaysia Bhd, the two brewers in Malaysia, have consistently raised concerns that raising excise duties on alcohol would fuel the illicit alcohol trade, undermining legitimate businesses and resulting in significant government revenue losses.

Both brewers have previously highlighted that Malaysia already has one of the highest excise duty rates on beer globally, and further hikes could exacerbate the issue by making illegal, duty-free products more attractive to consumers.

Carlsberg Malaysia emphasised

that the illicit trade poses health risks because contraband products have no regulatory oversight, while Heineken Malaysia stressed that tax increases will hurt local retailers and businesses dependent on legal alcohol sales.

The brewers have been advocating stronger enforcement against illicit trade rather than increasing alcohol taxes, citing estimates that contraband beer accounts for a significant share of the market, especially in East Malaysia, resulting in hundreds of millions in lost government revenue annually.

Samenta welcomes positive and pragmatic measures

➤ However, SME association stresses need for effective execution

■ BY DEEPAKSHMI MANICKAM
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday tabled Budget 2026, pledging to maintain fiscal discipline while ensuring that support measures do not impose additional burdens on the public.

The overall allocation stands at RM470 billion, with operating and



development expenditure set at RM419.2 billion. Anwar, who is also the finance minister, said the government is committed to reducing the fiscal deficit from an estimated 3.8% of gross domestic product this year to 3.5% in 2026, with the goal of reaching 3% in the medium term.

"Ordinarily, when additional expenditure is needed for infrastructure and aid for the people, additional taxes would be imposed. But the government has chosen to improve governance, including targeting subsidies, without adding to the burden of the people," Anwar said in Parliament.

The Budget includes the largest-ever allocations for Sabah and Sarawak, RM6.9 billion and RM6 billion respectively, as part of Putrajaya's efforts to close development gaps under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63). The special grant for both states will be doubled to RM600 million, while RM1.2 billion will be channelled to support Sabah's electricity supply despite regulatory decentralisation.

Civil servants will see a boost under Budget 2026, with an additional RM18 billion set aside for wage increases next year and a one-off RM500 aid payment. Anwar also confirmed that the 20% salary cut for Cabinet ministers will remain in place.



On the business front, the government will expand credit guarantees under *Syarikat Jaminan Pembiayaan Perniagaan* (SJPP) to RM30 billion, up from RM20 billion previously, as part of a RM50 billion total financing commitment to SMEs. Measures to strengthen digitalisation, AI adoption, automation and export capacity were also outlined.

In response to the announcement, the Small and Medium Enterprises Association of Malaysia (Samenta) described Budget 2026 as "positive and pragmatic," noting that it reflects many of the priorities raised by the association.

"We are pleased to see the government expand credit guarantees via SJPP and commit to RM50 billion in total SME financing support. This directly addresses one of the top concerns among SMEs, which is limited access to affordable credit," said its national president, Datuk William Ng (*pic*).

He added that the government's emphasis on digitalisation and productivity upgrades was in line with Samenta's calls for practical support.

"The allocations under SME Bank, Mara, BSN and AIM demonstrate that

the government recognises entrepreneurship as the foundation of inclusive growth.

"However, we must ensure that these initiatives reach micro and small businesses outside the Klang Valley, including the East Coast, Sabah and Sarawak," Ng said.

On exports, Ng welcomed the RM5 billion SJPP export guarantee, RM60 million in Matrade market grants and the expansion of the MyCIF framework to Asean markets.

"Despite being our nearest neighbours, intra-Asean trade remains at a low 21%. We are hopeful that these initiatives under Budget 2026 will drive greater trade among member states as a hedge against global geo-economic risks," he said.

Ng concluded that the Budget was one of "direction and delivery", with meaningful steps towards SME resilience and regional competitiveness.

"If implemented effectively, this budget can help our SMEs move from survival to regional leadership. What matters now is execution, and in making sure these initiatives reach every SME, not just those who already have access."

RM5.9 billion cross-ministry allocation for AI development

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will continue to lead in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and strengthen research, development, commercialisation and innovation activities with a cross-ministerial allocation of nearly RM5.9 billion, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said that in the effort to become an AI-driven nation by 2030, the National Artificial Intelligence Office would receive nearly RM20 million to develop highly skilled talent, enhance digital infrastructure, and build an efficient AI ecosystem.

Anwar said the government also planned to provide an additional 50% tax deduction to MSMEs for AI- and cybersecurity-related training expenses recognised by the MyMahir National AI Council for Industry, jointly led by TalentCorp and MyDigital.

"A Sovereign AI Cloud will also be developed by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) with an investment of RM2 billion.

"MCMC will establish an AI Transformation Centre in collaboration with Multimedia University and the Centre of Excellence in Ethics for Emerging Technologies as a culturally aware AI and research and development (R&D) hub," he said.

Anwar also announced an allocation of RM53 million under the Malaysia Digital Acceleration Grant to boost growth and adoption of technologies such as blockchain, AI and quantum computing.

"Meanwhile, Mimos will develop blockchain and deep-fake detection technologies," he said, adding that RM15 million had also been allocated for programmes such as Malaysia Techlympics, National Science Week, *Rehlah Sains* (Science Excursion) and Science on Wheels to cultivate interest in science, technology and innovation among youth. – Bernama

Malaysia to intensify efforts to counter anti-palm oil campaign

KUALA LUMPUR: Thanks to scientific findings, Malaysia has succeeded in countering Western criticism of palm oil through increased exports, especially to China and India, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said RM63 million has been allocated to intensify the campaign against anti-palm oil and encourage sustainable certification, including by private smallholders.

Anwar said that to reduce dependence on foreign workers and encourage local innovation, RM20 million has been provided to support startup companies in producing mechanisation and automation products in partnership with the Malaysian Palm Oil Board and major palm oil companies.

The government is also safeguarding the fate of smallholders who toil and sweat to earn a living on

the farms with an allocation of almost RM120 million, he said.

This includes supporting part of the cost of oil palm replanting for smallholders to replace ageing trees, encouraging rubber smallholders to produce rubber and redevelop abandoned private rubber plantations, and supplying cocoa smallholders with 1.1 million quality cocoa seedlings, including training assistance from industry players.

This also aims to reduce the burden on pepper smallholders due to the increasing cost of inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides, and support kenaf smallholders in increasing kenaf yields as one of the new sources of growth for agri-commodities.

Anwar also said the Malaysian Rubber Board will develop a centre of excellence for research to ensure the industry's future sustainability, with an allocation of RM600 million. – Bernama

PETALING JAYA: Gross exports for 2026 are forecast to increase by 2.8%, particularly for manufactured and agriculture goods, backed by the continued expansion of the electrical and electronic sector (E&E), according to the Finance Ministry's Economic Outlook 2026 report released yesterday.

The report disclosed that this is driven by higher demand for semiconductor and AI edge applications, as well as competitive commodity prices.

Exports of manufactured goods are anticipated to expand by 3%, resulting from rising demand for both E&E and non-E&E products.

These products constitute shares of total manufactured goods at 50.4% and 49.6%, respectively. The E&E products are projected to grow by 3.9%, buoyed by steady demand for semiconductors.

This is in tandem with the continued technological upcycle, leading to a better performance outlook of the global semiconductor market at 9.9%, as reported by the World Semiconductor Trade Statistics.

Concurrently, exports of non-E&E products are estimated to rebound by 2.1% following higher demand, particularly for palm oil-based manufactured products; manufactures of metal; chemicals and chemical products; as well as machinery, equipment and parts.

Exports of agriculture goods are projected to grow by 3.3%, supported by sustained global demand for palm oil and palm oil based agriculture products, attributed to higher export volumes and competitive prices for

Exports to increase 2.8%

➤ Rise to be driven by semiconductor demand, AI applications and stronger regional trade links

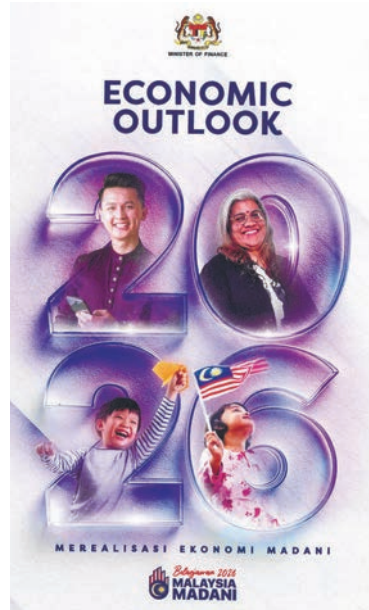
agriculture goods.

Conversely, exports of mining goods are estimated to contract marginally by 0.4% on account of lower exports of LNG and crude petroleum, partly due to slower demand from major importing countries.

According to the report, gross imports are forecast to increase by 3.9% in 2026, supported by growth in all components, reflecting Malaysia's steady performance in key economic sectors and strategic investment activities.

Imports of intermediate goods are anticipated to expand by 4.2%, particularly for parts and accessories as well as industrial supplies, in tandem with increasing exports of manufactured goods.

In addition, imports of capital goods are projected to expand by 4.3%, following continuous investment activities driven by data centre development, as well as



increasing demand for lumpy items such as aircraft and locomotive.

Imports of consumption goods are anticipated to rise by 3.9%, indicating stronger household spending with increasing exports of manufactured goods.

The current account of the balance of payments is forecast to register a lower surplus of RM23.2 billion or 1.1% of GNI in 2026, resulting from payments growing faster than receipts, following realisation of approved investments

and ongoing project developments.

The goods account is projected to record a narrower surplus of RM98.3 billion, contributed by strong imports, particularly for capital goods, which more than offset higher demand from major trading partners.

Contrarily, the services account is expected to turnaround and register a slight surplus of RM0.1 billion, attributed to a higher net inflow in the travel account and a smaller net outflow in the other services account, while registering a wider deficit in the transport account.

Receipts in the travel account are expected to increase to RM119.5 billion, bolstered by higher tourist arrivals. Nonetheless, payments in the travel account are anticipated to increase to RM65.3 billion, following residents spending abroad for business, education and pilgrimage travelling activities.

Incomes from the transport account are projected to reach RM37.1 billion, contributed by higher earnings from air travel and cargo handling services provided by domestic companies.

However, continuous dependency on foreign transport services is expected to increase payments in the transport account to RM69.9 billion, leading to a higher net outflow of RM32.8 billion in 2026.

Meanwhile, the other services account is anticipated to register a

smaller deficit of RM21.4 billion, supported by increasing earnings to reach RM130.6 billion, stemming from repatriation of profits on investment and ongoing strategic projects abroad.

Nonetheless, payments in the other services account are expected to be at RM152 billion, due to higher payments for the telcos, computer and information services as well as charges for the use of intellectual property.

The primary income account is forecast to record a wider deficit of RM61.6 billion in 2026, owing to higher payments in the compensation of employees and investment income accounts.

Payments in the investment income account are expected to increase, attributed to repatriation of profits by foreign investors, in tandem with robust investment activities, resulting in a higher deficit of RM49.9 billion.

Similarly, compensation for foreign professionals is anticipated to register a larger net outflow of RM11.7 billion, following the ongoing development agenda for HGV industries such as digital technology including AI, cloud computing and automation.

However, a narrowing deficit of RM13.5 billion is projected in the secondary income account, mainly due to higher remittances by Malaysians working abroad.

Optimistic outlook for labour market, jobless rate to remain at 3%

KUALA LUMPUR: The labour market is expected to remain optimistic in 2026, underpinned by resilient domestic demand and the continued expansion in key sectors.

It will also be supported by a boost in tourism following the Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VM2026) and the rollout of strategic public investments under the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP).

The ongoing structural reforms, particularly the wage-setting mechanisms and efforts to enhance working conditions, are anticipated to encourage greater labour force

participation and improve workers' well-being.

"While lingering uncertainties in global trade may weigh on hiring in export- and commodity-related industries, robust growth in domestic-orientated sectors is expected to sustain employment and wage growth," it said.

Accordingly, the unemployment rate is anticipated to remain at 3% in 2026. Total employment is projected to expand by 2.3% to 17.2 million persons, driven largely by job creation in the services and

manufacturing sectors, which are expected to continue accounting for over 80% of total employment.

The report said the number of low-skilled foreign workers is expected to decrease in 2026, attributed to the strict approval of foreign worker quota applications on a case-by-case basis for specific approved sectors such as agriculture, construction, and certain service industries.

The government also remains committed to reducing the dependency on foreign workers by

limiting the hiring ceiling from 15% to 10% of total employment, as outlined in the 13th MP.

The implementation of the multi-tiered levy mechanism in 2026 is also expected to further drive industries towards mechanisation and automation, thus further reducing demand for low-skilled foreign workers, it said.

On the other hand, continued demand for workers in the economy will be met through greater investment in automation and upskilling local workers to support

productivity gains.

Labour productivity is projected to increase by 2% to record RM103,700 in 2026, supported primarily by improvements in the construction and services sectors.

The report said this growth will be reinforced by ongoing efforts to strengthen skills development programmes to better align with industry needs, alongside greater investments in digital transformation and mechanisation to accelerate technology adoption across industries.

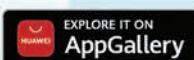
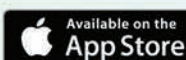
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PETALING JAYA: The services sector is projected to grow by 5.2% in 2026, with all subsectors contributing to the expansion.

This growth will be led by increased tourism activities, driven by a surge in visitor arrivals and spending related to VM2026, alongside sustained consumer spending.

According to the Economic Outlook 2026 report, the wholesale and retail trade subsector will remain the key driver for the services sector, with a growth of 5% mainly attributed to the retail segment.

Vigorous seasonal sales and promotional campaigns across stores as well as e-commerce and social media platforms will stimulate buying activities.

Meanwhile, the motor vehicles segment is expected to rebound, supported by higher booking for new vehicles.

The transportation and storage subsector is forecast to grow by 7.1%, supported by all segments following the expansion in rail, highway, port and airport activities.

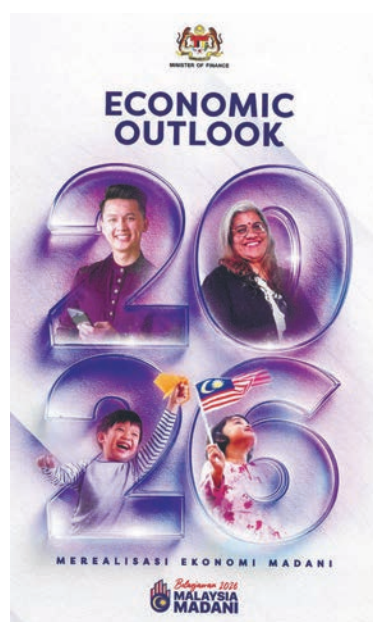
The land transport segment is anticipated to be boosted by the commencement of operations of the Light Rail Transit 3 Phase 1 and ETS south bound as well as operationalisation of the East Klang Valley Expressway.

Likewise, the air transport segment is expected to be driven by increased flight frequencies, expanded route connectivity and a surge in international passenger traffic in conjunction with VM2026. The targeted incentives and airport capacity upgrades will further support growth in both passenger and cargo segments. The water transport segment is projected to expand in tandem with encouraging trade activities.

The finance and insurance subsector is anticipated to expand by 2.8% with positive growth in all segments, supported by sustained economic activities. Under the finance segment, loan growth is anticipated to remain moderate amid

Tourism set to fuel services sector growth

➤ Retail and wholesale subsector will also be key driver of broad-based expansion, supported by sustained consumer spending



development of industrial parks. This expansion is also anticipated to be fuelled by new demand from key projects, including the JS-SEZ and continuous construction activities for new data centres.

The information and communication subsector is expected to grow 4.3%, mainly driven by expansion in AI technologies, data centre and cloud computing capacities as well as continued government support through comprehensive digital policies and infrastructure upgrades.

In addition, the subsector will be fuelled by higher social commerce activities via various social platforms as well as subscriptions of over-the-top media services for e-sports and entertainment. Major sporting events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup, BWF Thomas and Uber Cup 2026 and the 2026 Commonwealth Games will increase the number of subscribers, further boosting the subsector.

The food and beverages and accommodation subsector is poised to expand by 6.6%, in anticipation of higher visitor arrivals in conjunction with VM2026 as well as numerous business and leisure events nationwide.

The development of Special Tourism Investment Zones in Johor,

Malacca, Negeri Sembilan and Sarawak is expected to attract private investment and further boost tourism activities. The zones will showcase new tourism products focusing on arts, culture, heritage and natural attractions.

The utilities subsector is projected to expand by 1.7%, driven by steady demand from industrial and commercial users for electricity and water services. This is in tandem with the increase in industrial production activities to meet domestic and external demand.

The other services subsector is projected to rise by 4.6%, driven by private health and education segments. In particular, Malaysia Year of Medical Tourism 2026 initiative, emphasising affordability and high-quality healthcare services will attract more healthcare travellers.

The healthcare industry will continue to focus on a targeted marketing campaign, particularly in China, India and Indonesia. Meanwhile, private education is expected to remain robust, anchored by ongoing initiatives to draw in students such as through educational tourism, foreign partnerships and mobility programmes.

The government services subsector is forecast to record a growth of 6.8% in 2026 attributed to the implementation of salary adjustment under Phase 2 of the SSPA.

Expenditure on supplies and services is expected to remain steady following commencement of the 13th Malaysia Plan, 2026-30.

Manufacturing outlook stays strong in 2026

KUALA LUMPUR: The growth in the domestic manufacturing sector is projected to remain steady at 3% in 2026, supported by both export- and domestic-oriented industries.

The broader gains from the global technology upcycle are anticipated to continue supporting export-oriented industries, particularly those involved in semiconductor production, electronics manufacturing, and high-value component assembly.

The report said the domestic E&E cluster is expected to remain the key driver, with sustained growth across semiconductor products, particularly in the chips segment, following robust demand for AI applications and digitalisation.

These developments will further elevate growth prospects and strengthen Malaysia's position in the global E&E supply chain, the report noted.

Meanwhile, domestic-oriented industries will continue to be supported by higher output, underpinned by stable investment and consumption activities, alongside concerted government efforts to boost local production capacity, strengthen supply chains, and encourage the use of locally sourced materials.

A surge in visitor arrivals and rising gastronomic activities are expected to increase output in the consumer goods segment, particularly in food and beverages, supported by higher domestic spending and strong tourism-related demand.

Furthermore, Phase 2 of the Public Service Remuneration System implementation is anticipated to boost household spending.

The transport-related industries will also benefit from increasing logistics and travel activities, it said.

Domestic demand, private consumption and investment to stay robust

KUALA LUMPUR: Domestic demand is expected to register a growth of 5.4% in 2026, steered by sustained private sector expenditure at 5.7%.

The strong consumption and investment activities will keep the private sector's contribution significant at 4.5 ppt to GDP growth.

Meanwhile, public expenditure is anticipated to rise by 4.4%, contributing 0.8 ppt to overall growth.

According to the report, sustained income growth and favourable employment prospects will drive a 5.1% growth in private consumption.

In addition, spillover effects from the implementation of Phase 2 of the SSPA, STR, and Budi Madani RON95 (BUD195) targeted subsidy program are expected to provide further impetus to household spending, particularly among lower- and middle-income groups.

Consumer spending will also be stimulated by higher tourism-related activities alongside major national and international events, including VM2026 and MAHA 2026, as well as the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the BWF Thomas & Uber Cup 2026.

Moving on, the report said private investment is anticipated to register a growth rate of 7.8% in 2026, driven by



Private sector expansion, rising incomes and major national projects set to anchor Malaysia's growth momentum. — UNSPLASH PIX

increased capital spending on structures, machinery, and equipment in technology-intensive manufacturing and services sectors.

A large volume of approved investments is expected to be realised, particularly in semiconductors, renewable energy, and data centres.

This outlook is reinforced by the strong implementation track record,

with the execution of 85.1% of manufacturing projects approved between 2021 and June 2025.

Externally, the report said strong global demand for E&E, coupled with automation and digitalisation is expected to further stimulate investment in high-value and innovation-led activities.

At the same time, ongoing initiatives such as GEAR-UP and the

rollout of national masterplans will strengthen investor confidence and Malaysia's position as a competitive investment destination.

Public consumption is projected to grow by 3.2% in 2026, primarily driven by increased spending on emoluments following salary adjustment under Phase 2 of the SSPA.

Expenditure on supplies and services is expected to remain steady, ensuring the continued delivery of essential public services while aligning with the government's fiscal discipline and value-for-money principles.

Public investment is anticipated to expand by 7.3% in 2026, mainly driven by increased capital spending by public corporations, which are estimated to account for about 70% of total public investment.

According to the report, growth will be further underpinned by key developments in strategic sectors including utilities, energy, and transportation, to support economic resilience and future growth.

This includes projects to enhance electricity generation capacity and upgrade railway networks and public transport systems.

Public investment is also expected

to gain momentum in the first year of the 13th MP, driven by the implementation of new people-centric projects aimed at improving public well-being such as the construction of a cancer centre in the northern region, the upgrading of Miri airport terminal, and a program to strengthen national food security.

These initiatives will be supported by GLICs' strategic investments in priority sectors.

The report said public investment activities will continue to strengthen the national development agenda and promote inclusive, sustainable growth.

Furthermore, the report predicts that GNI will increase by 5.3% to RM23.2 billion in 2026 at current prices.

The share of GNS as a percentage of GNI remains high at 22.9%, primarily contributed by the private sector savings.

Meanwhile, total investment is expected to increase by 6.2% to RM450.5 billion and account for 21.8% of GNI.

The savings-investment gap is expected to record a surplus of RM23.2 billion, or 1.1% of GNI, providing ample liquidity for long-term productive investment.

TOP SHOTS



SELANGOR MEANS BUSINESS ... The Selangor International Business Summit 2025 opened at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre on Wednesday, bringing together more than 700 exhibitors and 50,000 visitors over four days. The opening ceremony was graced by the Raja Muda of Selangor Tengku Amir Shah Ibni Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah (centre). Others are Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy Transition and Water Transformation Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof (second, left), Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari (second, right), Selangor State Executive Councilor for Investment, Trade and Mobility Ng Sze Han (right) and Selangor State Secretary Datuk Dr Ahmad Fazli Ahmad Tajuddin (left).



SUSTAINABLE MINING ... Tin miner and metal producer Malaysia Smelting Corporation Bhd on Wednesday announced that 80%-owned subsidiary Rahman Hydraulic Tin Sdn Bhd won the Best Practices in Metallic Minerals Mining Award at the 4th Asean Mineral Awards 2025 held in Vientiane, Laos. The awards aim to recognise excellence in environmentally and socially sustainable mineral development across Southeast Asia. Rahman Hydraulic Tin executive director and senior general manager Madzlan Zam and environmental manager Mohd Azmizan Sulaiman represented the company at the award presentation ceremony.

PRESS CONFERENCE

OASIS HARVEST CORPORATION BERHAD

AND

METTA FOOD & LIFESTYLE SDN BHD

(Merger)



RESOUNDING APPROVAL ... Oasis Harvest Corporation Bhd announced on Wednesday that shareholders resoundingly approved - with over 99.99% votes in favour - the company's proposed acquisition of Metta Food & Lifestyle Sdn Bhd, the operator of the renowned De.Wan 1958 by Chef Wan and Cafe Chef Wan brands, for a total cash consideration of RM30.8 million. From left: Oasis Harvest non-independent executive director Datuk Seri Tan Ooi Han and executive director Ch'ng Eu Vern, De.Wan 1958 by Chef Wan and Cafe Chef Wan brands co-founder Datuk Dr Redzuawan Ismail (Chef Wan) and Metta Food & Lifestyle director Andre Shum.



HEALTHY PARTNERSHIP ... AIA Malaysia on Wednesday announced a strategic partnership with Big Caring Group, welcoming one of Malaysia's leading pharmacy chains into its growing network of healthcare collaborators. The collaboration introduces a full suite of digital health services exclusively on the AIA+ mobile application to enhance healthcare accessibility and convenience for customers. Marking the strategic partnership are AIA Malaysia chief corporate solutions and healthcare officer Tung Hsiao Ley (left) and Big Caring Group CEO Lee Meng Chuan.



POWER-FUL SENSOR ... NanoMalaysia Bhd, an agency under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti), in collaboration with Enhance Track Sdn Bhd and Universiti Tenaga Nasional, officially launched its Wireless-Powered IoT Battery Water Level Sensor System during the National Innovation and Commercialisation Expo 2025 at World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur, on Thursday. From left: Mosti secretary-general Datuk Seri Hasnol Zam Zam Ahmad, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Chang Lih Kang, Enhance Track managing director Dr Benedict Foo and Mosti deputy secretary-general (planning and science enculturation) Ruziah Shafei.



IN THE FAST LANE ... Touch 'n Go Sdn Bhd in collaboration with STAR Systems International has successfully demonstrated Malaysia's multi-lane fast flow (MLFF) proof of concept tolling system, marking a significant step towards barrier-free and smoother travel for motorists. An MLFF knowledge-sharing session was held for stakeholders and industry partners on how global tolling technology integrates with Malaysia's payments ecosystem, Touch 'n Go said in a statement. Picture shows Touch 'n Go CEO Praba Sangarajoo (right) presenting a token of appreciation to STAR Systems International CEO Robert Karr at the knowledge-sharing session.



FIRST RESPONDER RIDES ... Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming viewing a pair of motorcycles from the Fire and Rescue Department at the Malaysia World Habitat Day launch event at Semarak Hall in Cyberjaya. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN



HUGE HAUL ... A police officer arranging a portion of about 375kg of methamphetamine and 11kg of heroin worth approximately RM12.9 million that was seized from a vehicle on the North-South Expressway near Slim River in Perak. – BERNAMAPIC



LOVELY LANTERNS ... A man arranges items at a shop selling Mid-Autumn Festival decorations and goods at the Old Quarter in Hanoi, Vietnam. – AFPIC



COZY CANINE ... Liesl, a blind rescue dog, sleeps during a pet blessing ceremony at a mall in Quezon City, Metro Manila in the Philippines. – REUTERS/SPIC



GRACIOUS GREETING ... Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim accompanies his Pakistani counterpart Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif during an official welcome at the Perdana Putra Complex in Putrajaya. – BERNAMAPIC



TRIUMPHANT RETURN ... A crowd gathers to celebrate the arrival of 23 Malaysian volunteers who were detained and deported by Israeli forces for their participation in the Global Sumud Flotilla humanitarian mission to bring aid into Gaza. – ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN



POISED AND PRETTY ... Perla Harb (left) poses with Miss World 2025 Opal Suchata Chuangsrri after being crowned Miss Lebanon 2025 in Zouk Mosbeh, Lebanon. – REUTERS/SPIC



FELINE FAN ... A girl attempts to draw the attention of kittens at a cat expo at the Malaysian International Trade and Exhibition Centre. – ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN



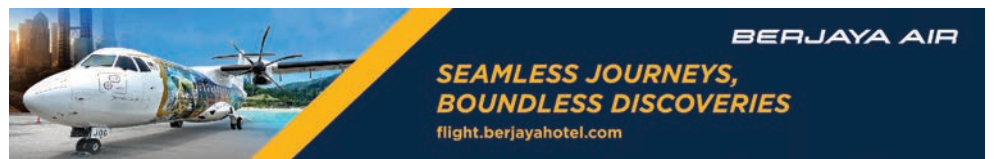
DYNAMIC DISPLAY ... A cultural dance being performed during the Asean Socio-Cultural Community Council Meeting welcome dinner at the Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre. – BERNAMAPIC



WATERLOGGED WALK ... A woman and a child riding in a pedicab on a street flooded due to Tropical Storm Matmo in Pampanga, the Philippines. – REUTERS/SPIC



REVERED RITE ... Boys dressed as Hindu deities Ram, Lakshman and Hanuman perform on the occasion of the Dussehra-Vijaya Dashami Festival in Nagpur, India. – AFPIC



If anyone tells you that “work-life balance” exists, they are either lying, deluded or living secretly as a monk somewhere in Genting Highlands.

For the rest of us in the trenches – working-class professionals with kids, mortgages and a perpetually half-empty fridge – it is not balance; it is juggling, often with one hand on a unicycle over a pit of crocodiles. And yet, somehow we keep going.

Take my mornings, for instance. My seven-year-old wants a full breakfast: chicken, rice, toast and water – not just any water, mind you, but the perfect temperature: not too hot and not too cold.

And then, there is the “special nugget” that only I know works like a magic potion to calm her autism-fuelled energy.

Meanwhile, my 10-year-old is busy debating life’s big questions over Milo: “Do people really need money to be happy?” And me? I’m rifling through a pile of homework, toy cars and unopened letters from the bank while desperately searching for my handphone.

By 7.15am, I am no longer just a mother or a professional; I am a multitasking, caffeine-fuelled octopus, trying to keep everything from collapsing before the morning chaos officially begins.

And the chaos does not stop there. At work, you are expected to stay fully focused, complete tasks efficiently and answer reporters’ questions with grace.

Yet, your brain keeps replaying the scene of your daughter climbing over the gate and sprinting 500m down the street – thanks to her elopement syndrome. It is amazing how quickly the mind can switch from a budget report to thinking, “Did I lock the front door?”

Juggling, not balancing: Life of a working-class mum



Colleagues think I’m superwoman. Me? I think I deserve a medal just for surviving another morning with my son as he interrogates why his burger isn’t cut into exactly four pieces while sipping his Milo and debating why it is called ketchup in America and not tomato sauce as in Malaysia.

When friends ask why I can’t catch up for a drink, they don’t know I have an 8pm appointment with chaos itself – otherwise known as homework and bedtime battles.

Then there is the commute – the daily two-hour trek from Seremban to Petaling Jaya that feels like surviving a full episode of *The Amazing Race*. It is also prime time for reflection: How can I do better today, impress my boss and get the recognition I deserve?

Or occasionally, it is just a mental replay of my youngest vomiting Milo on my way out the door and me wondering how I survived another morning.

Life lessons come in moments like these: patience, resilience and the uncanny ability to negotiate peace treaties over breakfast or mop up breakfast disasters in record time.

Lunch breaks aren’t much of a break either. I may sneak in a quick *nasi lemak* from the cafeteria, only to be interrupted by a WhatsApp

message from school: “Your child forgot to bring his homework” or “Minor incident – nothing serious, just a tear in the pants.”

By the time I return to my desk, my brain is juggling work deadlines and home crises at the same time. I start thinking in multiple languages – English for work, Malay for school updates and a secret “parent code” for negotiating with my children that no one else understands.

Dinner is another spectacle. “Don’t put onions in my scrambled eggs, *Ammal!*” cries one child while the other insists on mutton curry or chicken rice, depending on the day – the only food God ever created.

My husband and I exchange a look across the table: equal parts exhaustion, amusement and mild terror. Somewhere between the laughter and the scolding, we realise perfection is a myth.

Happiness is when everyone is fed, still speaking to each other and no one is smeared in *kopi-O*, *sambal* or anything else that can’t be tossed into the washing machine.

It is when your child spontaneously hugs you, your boss surprises you with *karipap* and *nasi lemak* or a traffic jam on the PLUS Highway turns into an unexpected solo sing-along because, let’s be honest, sometimes you are the only one keeping your sanity intact.

People often ask, “How do you manage it all?” I laugh. Manage? I don’t manage. I juggle. Sometimes things fall. Sometimes I drop a ball or two. And sometimes, through sheer luck, everything lands neatly back in place.

Juggling is messy, chaotic and utterly human but it’s also beautiful. Amid the chaos are tiny, sparkling moments that make it all worthwhile – when my children say, “I love you, *Amma!*”, when a colleague notices your efforts or when everyone is finally asleep on a rare quiet evening and you can savour a hot cup of Bru coffee in peace without anyone asking for a sip.

Life as a working-class professional is not about balance; it is about improvisation, humour and learning to let go of guilt. It is about realising that “work-life balance” is just a fancy way of saying, “I have no idea how to manage my life.”

Above all, it is about juggling and somehow laughing through it all.

Here’s to all of us who juggle, stumble, drop a ball and pick it up again: we may not have balance but we have grit, love and enough Milo, *teh tarik* and caffeine to fuel a small country. Sometimes, that is more than enough.

Hashini Kavishtri Kannan is the assistant news editor at theSun. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

Bold leaders needed to drive education reform

COMMENT
by Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Ibrahim

AS Malaysia edges closer to 2030 – along with its ambitions of becoming a high-income, innovation-driven nation – one uncomfortable reality continues to obstruct our progress: education.

Few would dispute that a major risk to the nation’s future is a botched education system. And not many would deny that our education system reform needs bold, visionary leadership. Yet, progress remains slow and the struggle continues.

For too long, education leadership in Malaysia has been about managing the status quo, not reimagining it. While policy documents and blueprints declare ambitious digital classrooms, 21st-century skills and globally competitive graduates, these aspirations often stall at the implementation stage. Not because the ideas are not sound but because the leadership tasked with driving them isn’t empowered, equipped or selected to innovate.

If Malaysia is serious about transforming its education system and securing its future, it must invest in cultivating a new generation of education leaders – innovators, disruptors and visionaries capable of navigating a rapidly changing global education landscape.

The challenges are well documented and have been voiced countless times in the media, yet no one seems to be truly listening. Leadership appointments, whether in ministries, public universities or schools, are still influenced by political allegiance and bureaucratic seniority rather than merit, fresh thinking or a proven track record in educational transformation.

Even capable leaders find themselves hemmed in by rigid systems, outdated rules and a deeply risk-averse culture.

Decision-making is overly centralised, professional development opportunities are patchy and genuine innovation is often met with resistance. This has created an education

ecosystem that is reactive rather than proactive – focused on managing problems instead of anticipating them.

Meanwhile, other countries in our region are moving swiftly. Singapore, Vietnam and even Indonesia have invested heavily in building leadership pipelines, industry-education partnerships and innovation clusters within their school systems while Malaysia is falling further behind.

The result is a persistent, damaging mismatch between what Malaysia aspires to achieve through its education system and what it actually delivers. Our students consistently underperform in international assessments, graduate unemployment remains high and employers lament the lack of critical thinking, creativity and communication skills in fresh graduates.

No reform – no matter how well-crafted – can succeed without leaders who are truly empowered and equipped to deliver it. This leadership gap is arguably the single most significant bottleneck in our national education agenda. To change course, we must be bold. There are some actionable, evidence-based steps policymakers can prioritise. Create a dedicated, professional body to train, certify and mentor school leaders, university heads and education officials.

There must be a focused investment in leadership for change management, digital transformation and pedagogical innovation – benchmarked against best-in-class institutions such as Singapore’s National Institute of Education Leadership Academy.

Empower principals, district education officers and university deans with greater autonomy to lead innovation tailored to local needs, supported by clear performance benchmarks and accountability systems.

Move away from politically motivated appointments. Install clear, merit-based selection criteria for leadership roles, focusing on proven innovation capacity, leadership acumen and education transformation experience.

Form national education advisory councils that include edtech innovators, employers,



Encourage schools, universities and districts to trial new teaching methods, digital tools and alternative assessment models. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

NGOs and student leaders. Position education leadership within Malaysia’s broader innovation ecosystem to keep it relevant, agile and demand-driven. Tie career progression and rewards to measurable innovation outcomes – such as successful pilot projects, community engagement programmes and digital learning adoption – rather than just years served.

Encourage schools, universities and districts to trial new teaching methods, digital tools and alternative assessment models. Use data to identify scalable innovations rather than enforcing a one-size-fits-all system.

The stakes are too high to delay. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, countries with agile, forward-thinking education leaders will outpace those shackled by bureaucracy and politics.

Malaysia cannot afford to let its education system fall further behind. A progressive,

resilient nation demands schools and universities led by individuals who can anticipate challenges, harness technology, inspire teachers and connect classrooms to communities and industries.

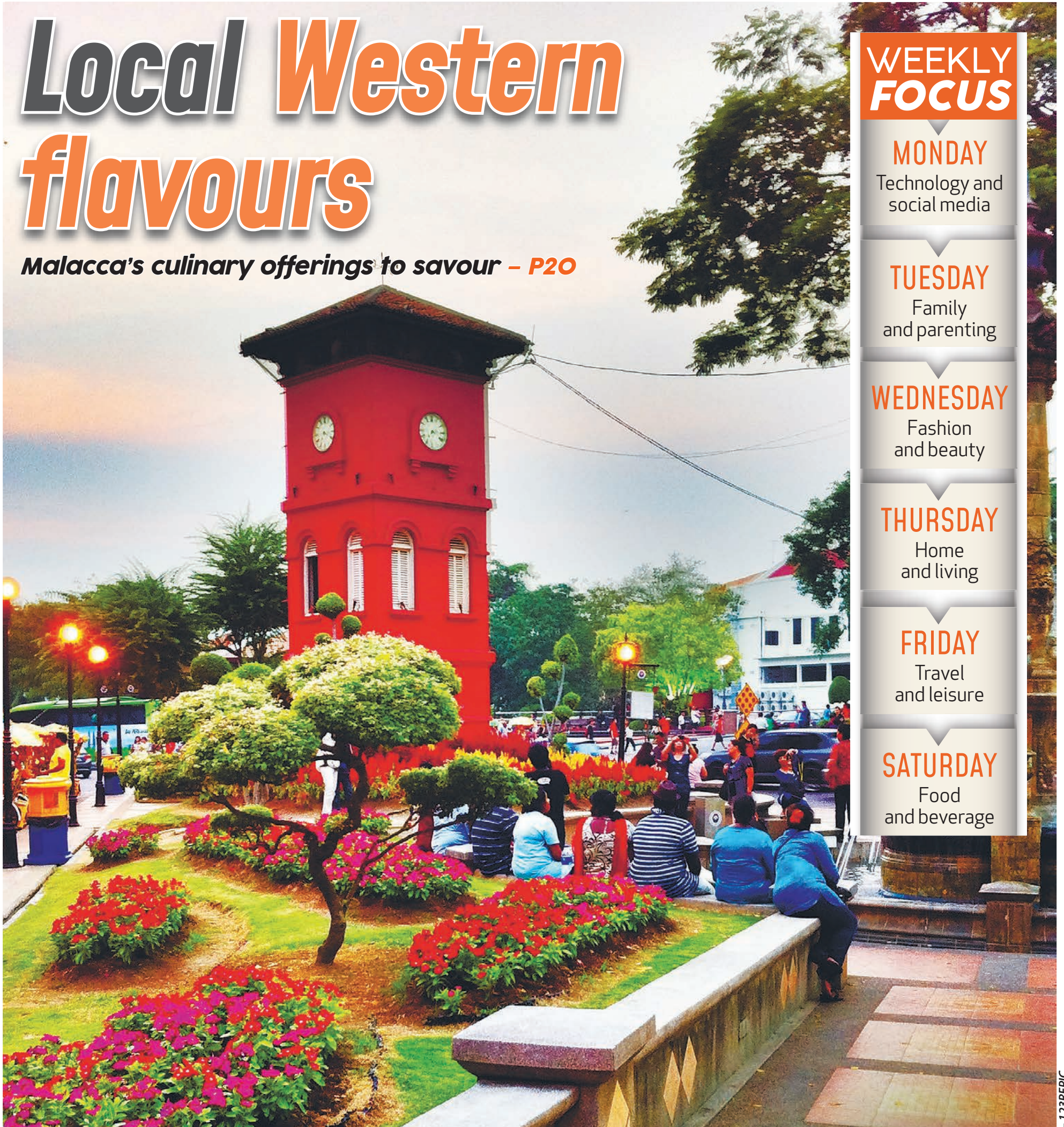
Malaysia’s most valuable untapped resource is not oil, palm or data but the potential of its young people. And only bold, empowered education leaders can unlock it. This isn’t just an education issue; it is a national development imperative. The time to invest in education leadership is now.

Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Ibrahim is affiliated with the Tan Sri Omar Centre for STI Policy Studies at UCSI University and is an associate fellow at the Ungku Aziz Centre for Development Studies, Universiti Malaya. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com



Local *Western* flavours

Malacca's culinary offerings to savour – P20



WEEKLY FOCUS

MONDAY

Technology and social media

TUESDAY

Family and parenting

WEDNESDAY

Fashion and beauty

THURSDAY

Home and living

FRIDAY

Travel and leisure

SATURDAY

Food and beverage

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Seven latest buzz spots for dining groceries

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Gordon Ramsay goes behind camera in new show

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Azlan & The Typewriter, Kristal X unite for gig



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Dining west

► Experience Malacca's Western flavours with these three eateries

BY JOHN TAN

THERE are plenty of things to rave about Malacca. From heritage buildings to modern attractions, the Unesco World Heritage site makes for a delightful travel destination. But what sets Malacca apart is its local culinary offerings. Its western flavours particularly stand out.

Be it the hamburgers or chicken fajitas, the Western choices are to die for. If you are looking to indulge in some, here are three eateries to check out in Malacca.

Galaxy Steampunk

For a more futuristic atmosphere, opt for Galaxy Steampunk at Taman Melaka Raya. The bar offers a futuristic dining atmosphere, featuring a unique blend of eclectic decor. The piping styles, pressure gauges and turning wheels covered in LED lights indeed mimic the inside of a spaceship.

Accompanying diners on board is a range of Western offerings, ranging from culinary classics and affordable alcoholic drinks. The thin-crust pizzas and homemade lava cake, however, are key items to look out for.

The thin-crust pizzas are what one can expect, delicate yet crispy, making for a satisfying crunch. The lava cake, on the other hand, comes with a rich sensation of hot chocolate stuck in between a warm and tender surface.

Galaxy tops it all off by its lively music performances. In moments of savouring, diners are accompanied with performances from various music acts, including current singers to renowned DJs.

Ram Kitchen & Bar

While Galaxy Steampunk thrives in



Ram Kitchen & Bar is located near the Malacca River.

futurism, Ram Kitchen & Bar capitalises on the laid back nature of Malacca. Nestled in the centre of Malacca City, Ram Kitchen & Bar is the ideal spot for a meaningful and relaxing catch-up with loved ones.

Conventional retail restrains are absent as the ambiance is delightful with relaxing music and a picturesque view of the Malacca River. Similar to the aforementioned eateries, a slew of western dishes (together with Indian) and alcoholic drinks are up for grabs too.

Some menu suggestions for the evening are the quesadilla and butter chicken pasta. One can consider these items as a companion for their alcoholic drinks, as they complement the bitter taste of the outlet's signature Tiger Soju.

While there is not much to take issue with the offerings, getting here, nonetheless, can be a little tricky for GPS users. For some reason, the app leads drivers to the backside of the cafe. Drivers are expected to walk to the riverside for the entrance.

But similarly to the previous two, Ram Kitchen & Bar is overall an ideal spot for food enthusiasts.

Cafe Casa De Mello

Located in the Portuguese Settlement, Cafe Casa De Mello caters to diners longing for home. The eatery is well-regarded among locals and travellers for its home-cooked western dishes. But contrary to other Western eateries, Casa De Mello's dishes come with a Portuguese twist.

The owners, who are of Kristang descent, complement the classic



The butter chicken pasta.



Ram Kitchen's quesadilla.

Western dishes with Portuguese flairs. Highlights from the menu include the lamb shank, pork tomahawk pork chop and slow cooked braised beef.

The homely and welcoming atmosphere adds to the eatery's charm too. Upon walking in, diners are greeted with warm greetings and a relaxing environment, reminding them of the delights of home.

So, if you ever struggle to find a spot for your Western cravings, feel free to visit these three eateries. While different in presentation, each one is catered to fulfil your specific craving and occasion.



The front entrance of Galaxy Steampunk. - PICS BY JOHN TAN/THE SUN



Cafe Casa De Mello is located in the Portuguese Settlement. - PIC FROM FACEBOOK @CAFE CASA DE MELLO



Galaxy Steampunk's thin-crust pizza.

TASTY RECIPE

JASMINE RICE BALLS

Ingredients:

2 cups Jasmine Sunwhite Fragrant Rice
3 cups water
¾ cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon oil
Salt to taste

Ingredient A:

1 teaspoon oil
100g carrot, finely chopped
17g nori (seaweed), crumbled

Ingredient B:

1 teaspoon oil
80g broccoli, finely chopped
40g canned tuna, flaked

Ingredient C:

1 teaspoon oil
1 egg, beaten
40g canned tuna, flaked
3 stalks spring onion, finely chopped



Sauce ingredients:

200ml water
½ cup chilli paste
80ml vinegar
70g granulated sugar
1 clove garlic, finely pounded
1½ tablespoons fish sauce
1 teaspoon cornstarch, mixed with 1 tablespoon water

Instructions:

1. For A: Heat oil and saute the carrots. Once softened, mix with crumbled seaweed.
2. For B: Heat oil and saute the broccoli. Once softened, mix with flaked tuna.
3. For C: Heat oil and scramble the egg until cooked. Chop it up and mix with flaked tuna and spring onions.
4. Wash Jasmine Sunwhite fragrant rice thoroughly.
5. Cook rice with water until perfectly done.
6. While still hot, mix in mayonnaise, oil and salt. Divide rice into three equal portions.
7. Mix portions A, B, and C into each rice portion respectively. Shape into balls.
8. For the sauce: Boil water, chilli paste, vinegar, sugar and garlic until sugar dissolves.
9. Add fish sauce and stir well. Pour in cornstarch mixture and cook until the sauce thickens.

Penang submits 10 dishes for heritage recognition

➤ State nominates *nasi kandar*, *mi jawa*, *pasembor*, among others

PENANG has nominated 10 of its traditional dishes to the National Heritage Department for recognition as national heritage, as part of the efforts to preserve the state's rich culinary legacy.

State Tourism and Creative Economy Committee chairman Wong Hon Wai said the dishes are *nasi kandar*, *pasembor*, *char kue kak*, *mi hokkien*, *mi jawa*, *oh chien*, *mi udang*, *mi sotong*, *kerabu bihun* and *roti benggali*.

"The nomination was recently submitted to the National Heritage Department and is undergoing



Nasi kandar is served with a variety of curries and often fried chicken.

evaluation before the dishes are officially recognised as national heritage.

"This gazette effort is vital, not only to preserve the state's culinary

heritage passed down through generations, but also to ensure Penang's world-renowned gastronomy continues to be protected, promoted and celebrated for future generations," he said.

He spoke to reporters after officiating the Intangible Cultural Heritage Conference at Universiti Teknologi Mara, Permatang Pauh campus recently. National Heritage Department director-general and heritage commissioner Mohamad Muda Bahadin was also present.

Wong expressed hope that more of Penang's traditional food will be recognised as national heritage under the National Heritage Act 2005.

Meanwhile, Muda said the 10 dishes have passed the expert committee's evaluation and will be declared as national heritage soon.

"Among the criteria assessed is that the dish must still be produced by the local community in the state. Most importantly, when recognising a heritage food, it is the community itself that plays a vital role in keeping the dish alive," he said.

According to him, 213 traditional dishes from various states and ethnic groups in Malaysia have been recognised as national heritage, including *char kue tiau*, *kuih angku*, *pulut tekan* with *seri kaya*, *laksa*, *pie tee* and *gerang asam*.

Themed "Upholding Culinary Heritage", the biennial two-day conference, organised by the department, serves as a platform for experts, government agencies, academics, industry players and communities to share insights and ideas on safeguarding Malaysia's intangible cultural heritage. - Bernama



Mi jawa is a warm, hearty delight. - PICS FROM 123RF

Lotus's unveils Masak-Masak Ceria cooking competition

LOTUS Stores (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd (Lotus's Malaysia) is turning up the heat in the local food scene with the launch of Masak-Masak Ceria, its first-ever culinary competition designed to spotlight aspiring and professional chefs.

Organised in partnership with the Professional Culinaire Association Malaysia, and supported by TAEM Academy, Masak-Masak Ceria will take

place at Lotus's Ampang on Nov 1 and 2 and promises to be a vibrant celebration of creativity, flavours and culinary passion. Competitors will have the chance to display their skills, while food enthusiasts can look forward to fresh ideas, bold tastes and inspiring stories from Malaysia's kitchen talent.

"This competition is not only about a test of skills, but also a celebration of

Malaysia's culinary heritage, unique flavours and the use of Lotus's quality products. It's an opportunity for participants to gain international recognition, as the top three winners from the professional category will go on to represent Lotus's Malaysia at the Thailand Ultimate Chef Challenge in Bangkok next year," Lotus's Malaysia customer and marketing executive director Nuathip Pitukpongsatorn said.

As these established chefs and aspiring cooks compete using ingredients sourced from Lotus's, the event goes beyond a typical culinary challenge. It is a showcase of how Lotus's delivers consistent quality and value to households and professional kitchens alike. For hotel, restaurant and catering and food business operators, it is a reminder that behind every great meal is a reliable supplier that understands the demands of the food industry.

The competition will feature two categories:

➤ Professional category: For established chefs aged 25 to 40.

➤ Young chef category: For home cooks, students and aspiring chefs aged 18-30

Participants will be tested on creativity and technique, presentation



Yau guiding participants at the Lotus's Jom Masak! Cita Rasa Malaysia cooking workshops.

and plating, and their ability to tell their culinary story through their dishes, featuring different ingredients and themes each round. The goal is to impress a set of culinary expert judges such as chefs KK Yau, Bob Adnin, Amy Beh and Arief Khalid.

After two thrilling rounds of competition, one winner from each category will be crowned the Masak-Masak Ceria champion, taking home RM3,000 Lotus's cash vouchers.

How to enter:

➤ Professional category: Applicants

must submit their profile, resume and relevant culinary accreditations along with the registration form. Selected participants will be required to pay an entry fee of RM100.

➤ Young chef category: Applicants are to submit a two-minute introduction video introducing themselves and showcasing their passion for cooking, along with a Lotus's receipt (no minimum spend required) and the completed registration form.

Registration for Masak-Masak Ceria is open until Oct 17.



Yau (left) and Bob at the Lotus's Jom Masak! Cita Rasa Malaysia cooking workshops held at Lotus's Puchong and Lotus's Shah Alam.



Comfort food

► Cooking campaign shows how Malaysians use everyday meals to connect, express love

IN Malaysian homes, comfort food is more than a recipe – it is a feeling. It is the joy of recreating a childhood favourite, the warmth of cooking for someone we love and the quiet satisfaction of preparing a meal just for oneself.

As more Malaysians embrace home cooking in the wake of post-pandemic lifestyle shifts, the act of cooking is not just a necessity but also a source of joy, creativity and connection.

This was the heart of Find Joy in Cooking, brought to life through #EmborgComfortFood, a nationwide campaign by Emborg that invited Malaysians to share their ultimate comfort food stories. Over 300 Malaysians opened their kitchens and hearts, representing thousands

of minutes of joy stirred, baked and sauteed – and revealed a deeply personal and culturally rich relationship with food that went beyond ingredients and into the rituals of everyday life.

The campaign uncovered how Malaysians relate to comfort food:

- 91% cook for loved ones, showing how food is often an act of love – a way to care for family, partners or children.
- 47% cook alone, highlighting comfort food as a form of self-care, indulgence or emotional regulation.
- Four in five of comfort food dishes are warm, from a bowl of creamy soup to hot toast.
- One in two prepared larger portions to share, turning meals into moments of togetherness.
- 42% tie dishes to personal memories, from childhood kitchens to travel experiences or moments that gave them a sense of comfort and safety.

Beyond the numbers, Malaysians described comfort food with phrases like “tastes like a hug”, “warms my soul” and “not fancy, but full of love”, underscoring that comfort food here is defined not by complexity but by emotion. Most dishes were made with humble, everyday ingredients – from cheesy toast to creamy broccoli soup, yet they carried deep meaning.

“Through this campaign, we saw how food becomes a language of love. It was never just about sharing recipes, it was about rediscovering the emotional power of food and celebrating the stories behind every dish,” said Emborg Malaysia country manager Felix Ewe.

Comfort food in Malaysia is as diverse as its people. Across entries, the constant was familiarity rather



The act of cooking is not just a necessity but also a source of joy, creativity and connection.

than any single ingredient – warm, savoury dishes built from everyday staples. While cheese is not traditionally part of local cuisine, many participants found creative ways to fold it into familiar recipes, pairing it with bold spices and textures that reflect local tastes.

Across submissions, a recurring pattern emerged: dishes often combined starches like rice, noodles or bread with creamy textures and umami-rich elements, a trio many Malaysians associate with ultimate comfort.

Tomatoes (23%) and mushrooms (20%) were among the most-used ingredients, not only for flavour but also for how well they complemented dairy. Alongside with these staples, entries showed a preference for local herbs and aromatics like pandan, lemongrass, curry leaves and basil, underscoring comfort built on rooted, familiar flavours.



A dish such as creamy tomato pasta brings out the simple joy of cooking.

Some home cooks embraced playful reinvention, experimenting with unexpected combinations such as golden kaya toast or buttermilk

kerang (clams), reminding us that comfort food can be nostalgic, inventive and deeply Malaysian, all at once.



Celebrity chef Nik Michael Imran dishes up creamy tomato pasta at the Find Joy in Cooking event recently.

Taste wonders of Australia

BY ASHIQIN AHMAD

AUSTRALIAN horticulture, dairy, meat, seafood and wine recently came together under the Australian Food and Wine Collaboration Group to showcase “Taste the Wonders of Australia” in Kuala Lumpur.

The showcase is a collaboration between The Australian Food and Wine Collaboration Group, which brings together Hort Innovation

Australia, Dairy Australia, Meat and Livestock Australia, Seafood Industry Australia and Wine Australia. It is designed to boost trade ties, improve market access to Australian goods and give consumers a closer look at the country’s premium food and wine.

The showcase features a variety of interactive workshops and tasting sessions. Visitors to the showcase will be able to explore Australian dairy through cream cheese and yoghurt, learn about the country’s premium fruits and vegetables, discover the future of its seafood industry, enjoy both classic and contemporary wines and get insights into the latest trends in Aussie beef and lamb.

This year’s programme is particularly meaningful as it coincides with the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Malaysia.

With Malaysia ranked as Australia’s 11th largest trading partner in agriculture, exports to the country reached A\$1.8 billion (RM4.9 billion) in 2024 and 2025. Malaysia’s rising affluence, expanding middle class and appetite for premium imports make it a significant growth market for



Aussie lamb.

Australian producers.

Hort Innovation Australia general manager and biosecurity R&D Dr Mila Bristow said the collaboration helps agencies and producers present themselves in Malaysia as a united group under the Nation Brand, which creates stronger visibility and long-term relationships.

She added that the initiative places an emphasis on sustainable partnerships. Industry leaders pointed

to Malaysia’s evolving demand for premium products.

Meat and Livestock Australia regional manager for Southeast Asia, Valeska V, noted that Malaysians are among the highest per capita consumers of beef and lamb in Southeast Asia.

Seafood Industry Australia CEO Veronica Papacosta highlighted strong interest in rock lobster, salmon and sea cucumber while Dairy



An array of fresh Australian goods.

Australia sustainable international trade senior manager Catherine Taylor reaffirmed its long history of cooperation with Malaysian partners dating back to the 1960s.

With Australian avocados, cherries and almonds already a familiar sight in Malaysian supermarkets, the showcase will build even stronger awareness and appreciation for Australian produce while paving the way for future growth in the sector.



Seafood produce.

BUZZ SPOTS

Terrace @ Boulevard

Terrace @ Boulevard is a three-storey culinary hub spanning 30,000 sq ft, located at Sunway Pyramid. Formerly known as the Blue Cube, it is just a few steps away from the iconic Lion Head. It brings a curated selection of unique eateries and cafes, offering everything from savoury delights to tempting sweet treats. One highlight is Seminyak by Warung Eropa, featuring a modern, casual dining concept with a strong Balinese influence in restaurant design and authentic menu.

Visitors can also head to Come True Cafe, known for its modern Taiwanese-inspired fusion cuisine that is Muslim-friendly as well as its exquisite souffles.

**Jaya Grocer**

Jaya Grocer has opened its newest outlet at Toppen Shopping Centre in Johor Bahru. It is Jaya Grocer's fifth outlet in Johor and highlights its commitment to serving local communities with fresh, high-quality groceries while also strengthening partnerships with Johor's farming and business networks. Part of the Grab ecosystem, the Toppen Shopping Centre outlet also offers exclusive deals through the Jaya Grocer membership programme, as well as online shopping via GrabMart, like other Jaya Grocer stores.

**TamJai Mixian**

Hong Kong rice noodle brand TamJai Mixian has opened its first store in Malaysia at Sunway Pyramid. To guide first-time diners and highlight fan favourites, TamJai Mixian has curated a list of eight must-try bowls that showcase the best of its bold, customisable flavours. Standouts include the TamJai Supreme Mixian (a hearty bowl loaded with 15 toppings), the fiery and flavour-packed Numbing & Spicy Mala Soup Mixian and the tangy, comforting Tomato Soup Mixian. These bowls are a great introduction to TamJai's unique street food experience – with plenty more to explore across the full menu.

**Luckin Coffee x Fiziwoo**

Luckin Coffee, the coffee brand, has collaborated with local couture house Fiziwoo to unveil a concept store at Pavilion Damansara Heights. This partnership, themed "Rasa Merdeka, Gaya Malaysia", weaves traditional batik artistry into contemporary coffee culture, creating a lifestyle space where Malaysians can enjoy a unique coffee experience while celebrating heritage in hand. More than just a retail partnership, this collaboration is a celebration of Malaysian identity through the lens of design, craftsmanship and coffee innovation.

Teh Tarik Nation

Teh Tarik Nation's debut flagship store at 1 Utama Shopping Centre in Petaling Jaya offers a full immersion into Malaysia's most iconic drink. Through this space, Teh Tarik Nation invites all to reconnect with *teh tarik* in its most authentic form, beginning with the Signature Teh Tarik. While heritage remains central, Teh Tarik Nation also offers a curated menu designed to celebrate the familiar and the unexpected. Beyond its Signature Teh Tarik, time-honoured classics such as Wood-fire Roasted Kopi, Teh Halia and Chai Masala form the heart of the menu, celebrating Malaysia's rich and diverse beverage heritage. Alongside these are gentler interpretations of tradition, including Teh Tarik Pandan, Teh Tarik Rose and Teh Tarik Mint – crafted with care for those who enjoy familiar flavours with a delicate twist.

**Village Grocer**

Village Grocer has opened its 34th supermarket outlet, located in IOI Mall, Bandar Putra Kulai in Johor. This is the third Village Grocer outlet in the state. Kulai marks another milestone for Village Grocer, as the brand continues to expand its footprint and bring its premium grocery offerings to communities in Johor. The new outlet will serve as a one-stop destination for shoppers seeking the freshest produce, high-quality meats, artisanal baked goods, and a wide selection of specialty and gourmet items. The outlet is open daily from 10am to 10pm.

**Shantea Dessert**

Shantea Dessert has opened an outlet at Mid Valley Megamall, with nationwide expansion and future regional ventures in the pipeline. Designed to delight the palate while reminding of the value of everyday nourishment, it embodies the belief that wellness can be beautiful and joyful. The menu spans signature desserts, teas, milk teas and Glow Fresher beverages, with highlights including the Mango Coco Mochi Hug, Musang King Coco Cloud and Coconut Longjing Bird's Nest.



Plant-based foods often mimic meat products.

Veggie 'burgers' could face EU labelling ban

PLANT-BASED "steaks" and "veggie burgers" may be on the way out in the European Union after the bloc's parliament recently voted to restrict such labels to meat only, in a win for disgruntled farmers.

Many of Europe's livestock farmers see plant-based foods that mimic meat products as potentially misleading for consumers and a threat to their already troubled sector.

Heeding their message, EU lawmakers meeting in Strasbourg backed a proposal to reserve a list of labels including "sausage" and "burger" to foods containing meat.

A labelling ban is still some way off: the text needs negotiating with the bloc's 27 member states before it can become law.

But Celine Imart, a cereal farmer and right-wing lawmaker from France who sponsored the plan, cheered the vote as a "victory for farmers".

"A sausage means meat produced by our livestock farmers. Full stop.

"This is a vote for recognising their work and for transparency for consumers," she posted on X.

Enjoying strong support from France's livestock and meat industry body, the ban was approved by a comfortable majority of 355 votes in favour and 247 against.

Food retailers in Germany, Europe's largest market for plant-based alternative products, had spoken out against the text, along with environmentalists and consumer advocates.

Irina Popescu, food policy officer at the pan-European consumer body BEUC called the outcome "disappointing".

"Our data shows that almost 70% of European consumers understand these names as long as products are clearly labelled vegan or vegetarian," she said in a statement.

EU consumption of plant-based alternatives to meat products has grown five-fold since 2011, according to BEUC data, fuelled by concerns over animal welfare and greenhouse gas emissions from livestock farms as well as health arguments.

It is not the first time veggie burgers have found themselves in the crosshairs of European lawmakers, with a similar proposal for a ban rejected in 2020. – AFP



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Chasing Michelin glory



Ramsay is an executive producer of the eight-part Apple TV+ series.
– PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @GORDONGRAM

➤ Gordon Ramsay's TV show highlights restaurants aspiring for iconic accolade

CEBLEBRITY chef Gordon Ramsay goes behind the camera for new series *Knife Edge: Chasing Michelin Stars* that shines the spotlight on restaurants working to attain the coveted culinary accolade.

The multi-starred restaurateur and TV personality is an executive producer of the eight-part Apple TV+ series, which visits eateries in the US, Britain, Italy, Nordics and Mexico seeking to gain, or retain, stars.

"(It) is a sort of a real reflection on what goes on in these businesses: what's at stake, what kind of jeopardy is up for grabs and then the emotions."

"This is (an)...unscripted, real version of life in the culinary world and the extent you go to for the badge of honour ... Actors want Oscars, football players want FA Cup winners' medals, chefs want Michelin stars," Ramsay said.

Episodes show host Jesse Burgess meeting chefs as they compose menus, primp up dishes and seek to impress that lone diner who may be a secret Michelin inspector. There is also input from the anonymous Michelin inspectors, voiced by actors.

"We ask them questions and they answer. In reality, it was all ... very secretive so that none of the producers or nobody actually saw the real-life inspectors.

"They just judge the food on the plate," Burgess said.

Ramsay received his first Michelin star when he was head chef at London restaurant Aubergine. His own Restaurant Gordon Ramsay has held three stars since 2001.

"You become an overnight sensation and then you've got the fight and the slug to maintain it ... you need to understand the word delegation, teaching, creating, and most importantly, passing the baton on.

"I have one foot in the kitchen and one foot in the media world and am I there 16 hours a day? No, of course I'm not. I am there like a conductor and I'll sign things off, but I want to hear from them ... And so maintaining it is where the real work starts," he said.

Asked if he still gets nervous when Michelin issues new editions of the guide, Ramsay said:

"I do get nervous ... no one likes losing ... (going) down to even two stars is unique, but ... it's major headlines if you do. I'm often asked, 'What would you do if you did lose a star?' Then, I'd fight and win it back." – Reuters

Ramyeon consumption highest in Vietnam, followed by South Korea

SOUTH KOREA ranked second after Vietnam in per capita consumption of *ramyeon*, or instant noodles, last year, Yonhap News Agency reported, according to the Osaka-based World Instant Noodles Association (Wina).

Wina said the country's overall *ramyeon* consumption reached 4.1 billion units last year, ranking eighth worldwide, while its per person consumption stood at 79.2 in the country of 51.75 million people.

The Korean figure followed the Southeast Asian country, with a population of 100 million, Vietnam's 81 per person consumption, ranked fourth in overall consumption at 8.14 billion units.

Thailand ranked third in terms of per-person consumption at 57, followed by Nepal at 54, Indonesia 52, Japan and Malaysia 47 each, Taiwan 40, the Philippines 39, and China, including Hong Kong, at 31.

Per capita *ramyeon* consumption tends to be high in Asian countries with traditional noodle-eating cultures while, in contrast, the figure remains below 10 in many European countries.

In recent years, South Korea's *ramyeon* consumption has steadily risen from 3.79 billion units in 2021 to 3.95 billion in 2022 and 4.04 billion in 2023.

Last year, global *ramyeon* consumption climbed 2.4% on-year to 123.07 billion units with China, including Hong Kong, topping the list with 43.8 billion units, more than 10 times South Korea's volume.

Ramyeon consumption in Europe remains low, but demand is growing, helped by the global popularity of K-pop and K-food.

Nongshim Co has released Shin Ramyun products featuring characters from the global hit animated movie *KPop Demon Hunters*. Samyang Foods Co, the maker of the world-famous Buldak spicy *ramyeon*, is also seeing rising demand for its products in overseas markets.

From January to September, South Korea's *ramyeon* exports jumped 24.7% on-year to 1.6 trillion won (RM4.8 billion), according to the Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corp. – Bernama-Yonhap



Malaysia ranks 47th in per-person *ramyeon* consumption. – PICS FROM 123RF

Rockolusi Kuasa Dua unites legends

► Kristal X, Azlan & The Typewriter to rock Zepp Kuala Lumpur stage in February 2026

BY ASHIQIN AHMAD

ZEP Kuala Lumpur is set to erupt in rock energy in February as two legendary Malaysian acts, Kristal X and Azlan & The Typewriter unite for a night of musical nostalgia and powerhouse performances.

Their concert, Rockolusi Kuasa Dua, will take place on Feb 1, 2026, marking the first major showcase of the year by Republic Mokhmah



Azlan expresses excitement and gratitude for the bands's collaboration.

Records. Fans of timeless hits such as *Memburu Impian*, *Luahan Hati*, *Suatu Kenangan* and *Seragam Hitam* can look forward to hearing them performed live.

For Azlan & The Typewriter fans, it will be a chance to relive the emotional depth of *Jangan Khianati Aku*, a song that became a sensation not only in Malaysia but across Indonesia.

According to a Republic Mokhmah Records representative, the concert aims to reignite the legacy of both acts while celebrating the enduring passion of their loyal fanbase.

"Kristal X is a legendary band that has grown alongside the Malaysian music industry. Its songs are evergreen, and the band's energy on stage remains unmatched. Having Azlan join Rockolusi Kuasa Dua makes this event even more exciting. He is one of the best vocalists of his generation, and this collaboration will showcase their musical strength to a new audience," he said at a press



Kristal X and Azlan & The Typewriter will unite for the upcoming Rockolusi Kuasa Dua concert.

conference this week.

Azlan shared his enthusiasm for the collaboration, saying he was honoured to share the stage with Kristal X, a band whose music shaped his own artistic journey.

"Kristal X and I will show that we are still here, still alive in the music scene. This is the time for fans to come out and enjoy our music live

and up close after waiting for so long," he said.

Adding a special touch to the concert will be the Nogori Arts School Voice Ensemble, a 24-member choir that recently won state-level awards and placed fourth nationally. The choir includes the children of both lead vocalists Lan Solo and Azlan, making the performance even more

personal and heartfelt.

The concert will mark the live debut of a new collaborative single titled *Rockolusi*, inspired by the theme of the event.

Tickets for Rockolusi Kuasa Dua are now on sale from RM168 to RM348. A special Royal Box package priced at RM8,000 is also available for a group of 10.

Afgan returns with intimate KL showcase

POPULAR Indonesian singer Afgan will reconnect with his loyal fans through the Afgan Retrospektif Showcase at Zepp Kuala Lumpur this December, in a more casual and intimate setting.

Afgan, whose full name is Afgansyah Reza, said in a statement that the show – scheduled for Dec 5 – coincides with the launch of his latest album *Retrospektif*, which reflects his life and career journey over the past several years.

"The meaning of 'retrospective' for me is a moment to look back at what has happened in the past and turn it into lessons to continue growing into a better person.

"This new album truly represents that idea. I've reflected on my life journey over the past few months, learned from the growth that has taken place and as a result, this album was born," he said.

Expressing excitement about sharing his new songs with Malaysian fans, Afgan said the

album also holds sentimental value as it is his first full Indonesian-language album in seven years.

"This album feels like a return to the genre that made my name – Indonesian pop. It's been a while since I created something like this, so *Retrospektif* feels like the perfect title and a turning point in my career," said the 36-year-old.

Promising an unforgettable performance, Afgan said he hopes each song he performs will carry its own meaning and memory for his Malaysian fans, as it will be their first time hearing these works live.

"I truly appreciate my musical journey that has become part of my fans' lives here – whether during moments of happiness or sadness. What matters most is when my songs can give them strength to face life with optimism and positivity," he added.

Fans can purchase tickets priced between RM358 and RM1,398. – Bernama



Afgan has promised an unforgettable show. – PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @AFGAN_



David's concert has been called off. – PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @CRAIGDAVID

Craig David cancels Malaysian gig

CRAIG David presents TS5: Live In Kuala Lumpur has been cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.

According to the official statement, all ticket purchasers will receive a full refund, including ticket charges and processing fees. The refund process will be automatically made to the original payment method used during the purchase on Ticket Empire.

For purchases made using FPX (online banking), Ticket Empire will contact the buyers via email to

obtain bank account details. The refund process is expected to take approximately 15 to 30 working days from the date of the announcement.

As a token of appreciation for fans' support, all ticket holders will also receive a Grab e-voucher worth RM10, which will be sent through T-Rex Studio's official WhatsApp account.

For further inquiries, ticket buyers can contact the official WhatsApp line or email.

Shila Amzah, Jaclyn Victor, Kunto Aji to perform in DFP next year

A star-studded lineup of local and international artistes, including Shila Amzah, Jaclyn Victor, Kunto Aji and Lea Salonga, will take the stage with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) at Dewan Filharmonik Petronas (DFP) during its 28th concert season next year.

In a joint statement, DFP and MPO announced that the new season, themed "Where Every Beat Tells a Story", promises an emotional blend of classical, contemporary and traditional music that aims to bring the prestigious concert hall and world-class orchestra closer to audiences from all walks of life.

"Shila Amzah will celebrate her 25-year music journey with a special concert in May, while Jaclyn Victor will mark two decades of her career with the MPO in October. Indonesian singer Kunto Aji will perform in the 'Simfoni Mantra' concert in November, and renowned Broadway star Lea Salonga will join her brother, MPO



Lea. – PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @MSLEASOLANGA

resident conductor Gerard Salonga, for a Broadway and Disney-themed concert in September," the statement said.

The 2026 concert season will also feature the unique production "Mak Yong Shakespeare: The Comedy of Errors – An Adaptation", directed by Norzizi Zulkifli, in July. It fuses traditional Malay performing arts with Shakespearean theatre in a modern interpretation.

Under the direction of MPO music director Junichi Hirokami, nine major concerts will be presented, including "A Chorale Spectacular", "An Evening of Verdi and Jazz" and "Classical & Beyond With The MPO".

The season will open in January with "Cirque de la Symphonie", a performance that combines orchestral music with circus acts.

Other highlights include "The Music of Queen" (October) and tribute concerts for the late Datuk Sharifah Aini (June) and the late Alfonso Soliano (September), conducted by Ahmad Muriz Che Rose.

Ticket sales are open to the public next Monday. – Bernama



Jaclyn. – PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @JACLYN_VICTOR

Bryan Adams's world tour hits Kuala Lumpur

► Artiste to electrify fans at Idea Live Arena in February 2026

BRYAN ADAMS is bringing his electrifying energy and iconic anthems to the Idea Live Arena on Feb 6, 2026 with his highly anticipated Roll With the Punches Tour.

Known around the world for his unmistakable voice and timeless hits, Adams continues to prove why he remains one of the most dynamic and enduring live performers of our time.

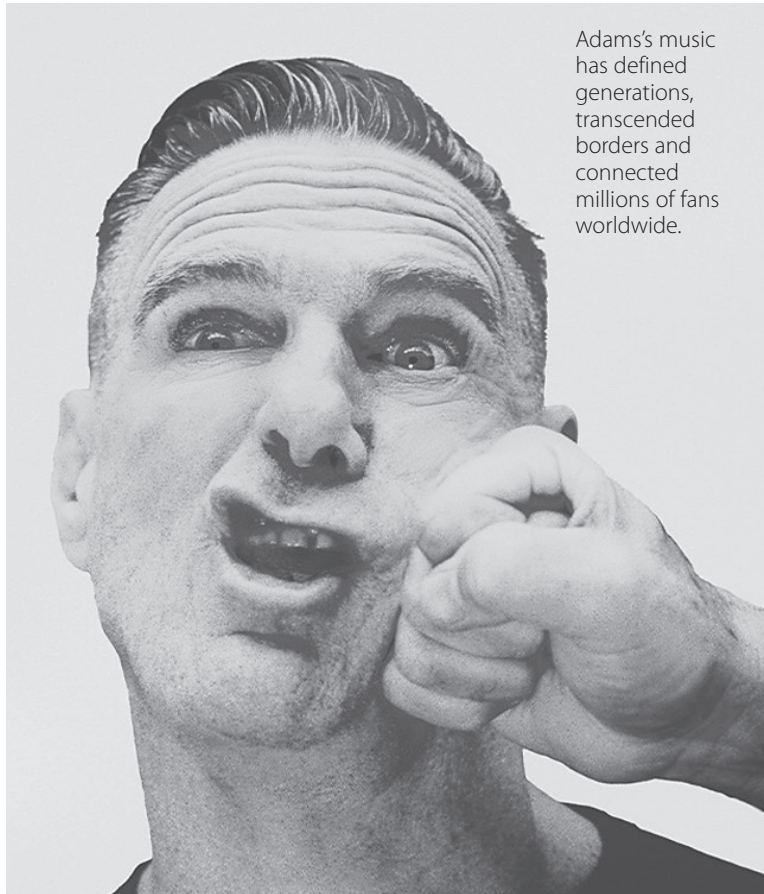
The Roll With the Punches Tour promises a night of unfiltered rock and roll magic, featuring classic chart toppers, fan favourites and powerful new material.

Fans can expect Adams's signature blend of heartfelt ballads and adrenaline-fuelled rock that has earned him countless awards, multi-platinum records and a permanent place in music history.

With over four decades of hits, Adams's music has defined generations, transcended borders and connected millions of fans worldwide. Now, Malaysian audiences will get the chance to experience his legendary showmanship and raw passion on stage.

Members of the public will have the opportunity to access a special pre-sale by visiting Adams's official website starting next Tuesday from 11am until 11.59pm.

Mastercard cardholders have



Adams's music has defined generations, transcended borders and connected millions of fans worldwide.

special access to presale tickets, which starts next Wednesday at 11am and ends on next Friday, 11am. Preferred ticket access to some of the best tickets are available from next Friday at 12pm.

Tickets to the general public will go on sale next Friday from 12pm.

Adams has been touring the world for nearly four decades. His music has achieved number one

status in over 40 countries and is the recipient of numerous Awards, including a Grammy, American Music Awards and three Academy Awards, five Golden Globe nominations and he is a Companion of the Order of Canada.

In August 2024, Adams launched Bad Records, his own independent label. The Roll With the Punches Tour started in May 2025.

Singer-songwriter Elijah Woods drops *I Miss You*

FRESH off his headline tour across Asia, breakout pop artiste and multi-platinum singer-songwriter and producer Elijah Woods shares one final preview of his debut album with the release of his new single *I Miss You*, an emotionally relatable pop track that sticks from the very first listen.

His highly anticipated debut album *Can We Talk?* drops Oct 14.

A classic Woods's love song, *I Miss You* captures the infectious charm of his earlier viral hits, channelling the same heartfelt energy and emotional immediacy that made *24/7*, *365* a breakout favourite.

Built around warm acoustic guitar riffs, a soaring, hook-heavy melody and intimate, emotionally honest lyrics, the song showcases Woods's gift for storytelling that feels familiar and deeply personal.

"*I Miss You* is about holding on to hope when love feels uncertain – that late-night belief that if we just keep trying, we can find our way back. It's emotional, but ultimately about faith in connection," he said.

After teasing the song across Instagram and TikTok last month, Woods quickly sparked a flood of anticipation, with fans lighting up the comments and urging for its release.

The forthcoming record *Can We Talk?* marks a major milestone for Woods. After releasing five EPs and a string of viral singles over the past five years, he has carved out a remarkable path as a fully independent artiste – amassing over one billion global streams, building a loyal fanbase of more

than five million followers and touring the world entirely on his own terms.

This debut album encapsulates the intimacy, vulnerability and emotional depth that have defined Woods's songwriting from the start, while confidently leaning into the clever, infectious pop sound that has powered his rapid rise.

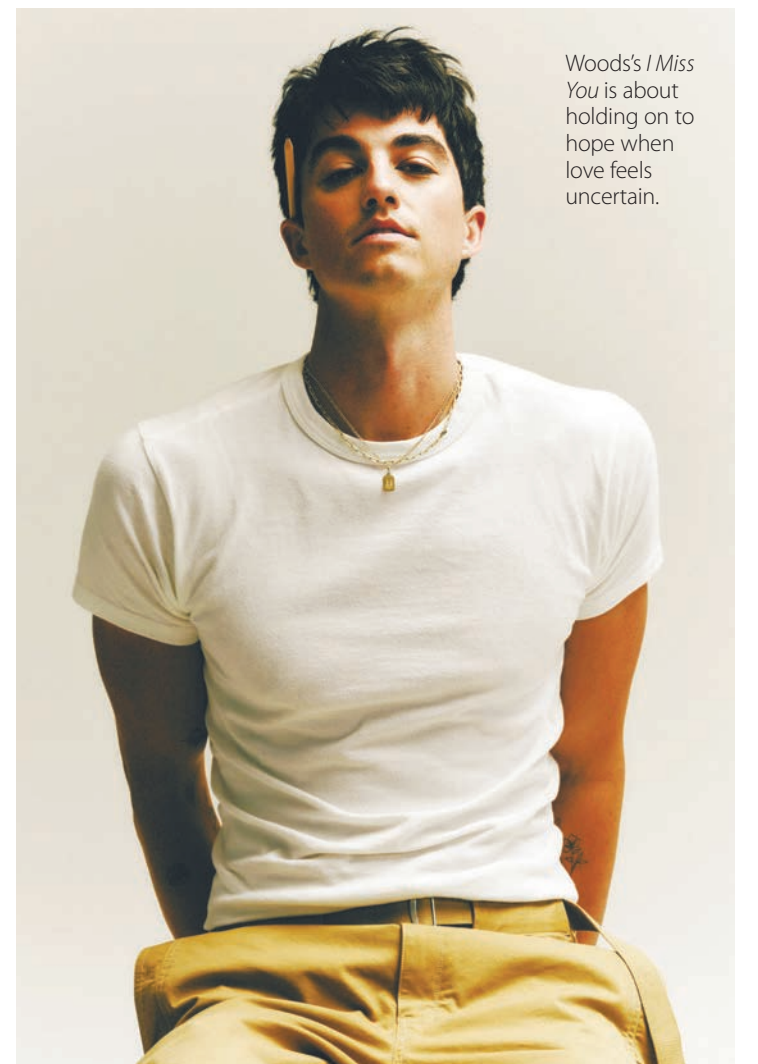
With *Can We Talk?*, Woods delivers exactly what fans have come to love: vibey, emotionally resonant tracks that speak straight from and to the heart.

Woods just wrapped his second headline tour across Asia, igniting 12 cities on the Give Me The Sunlight! tour – including sold-out shows in Taipei and Hong Kong, a marquee set at The Sounds Project in Jakarta and standout performances at Japan's iconic Summer Sonic Festival in Osaka and Tokyo.

With major stops in Manila, Singapore, Bangkok and more, the tour firmly established Woods as one of the most electrifying and fast-rising pop voices in the region.

In 2024, his rising prominence in Asia reached new heights – selling out his first Asia tour in May, opening for Niall Horan in Jakarta and taking the stage at the Seoul Jazz Festival alongside Lauv, Jeremy Zucker and JP Saxe.

Beyond the stage, Woods's charisma and personal style are making waves in fashion. He recently graced the cover of *Esquire Singapore* and was featured in *The Greatest Magazine*, *VMAN SEA* and *Nylon Manila* – with more on the way.



Woods's *I Miss You* is about holding on to hope when love feels uncertain.

Corbyn Besson, Tzuyu release single *Blink*

POP heartthrob Corbyn Besson and Tzuyu (from Twice) released their sleek and flirtatious new single and video *Blink*.

"*Blink* is a groovy, high-energy duet about savouring the magic of the moment when you lay eyes on

someone who takes over your whole world. It's like 'love at first sight', but a little more playful," Besson shared.

"Tzuyu (Twice) was amazing to work with and shooting a music video on the streets of Seoul was a first for both of us – the whole experience felt

really fresh and exciting. I can't wait to see how our fans react to the video."

This collaboration is a landmark moment for both artistes, who first rose to international fame as members of world-renowned groups and are now stepping into their solo eras.

Besson, best known as one-fifth of the multi-billion streaming and arena headlining boy band Why Don't We, joins forces with Tzuyu (Twice), whose role in Twice helped catapult the group into one of K-pop's most iconic and best-selling girl groups, consistently breaking records on the Billboard charts.

Within just the first two days of release, the track has been resonating strongly with fans. On YouTube, it has already surpassed 2.2 million views, peaking at number 13 on the Trending Music Charts. Over on Spotify, the song has quickly amassed more than 1.3 million streams and continues to climb. On TikTok, fans have embraced the track with over 3.2 thousand user-generated videos, collectively racking up an impressive 25.6 million views.



Tzuyu (left) and Besson. – PIC BY STONE TAUL



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- Undertake any other assignments as directed by management.

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- Executive/Senior: Minimum 1+ years' working experience in IT.
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1) MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN - PRINTING PRESS

Responsibilities:

- Equipment Maintenance & Repair**
 - Attend to repair work on Goss Presslines, Cary Reel Stand, Stacker, Conveyor System, Water Fountain System, Central Ink Pump System, and other auxiliary equipment during printing operations or as noted in the night maintenance log.
 - 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.
- Preventive Maintenance**
 - Prepare sufficient rubber roller, sock rollers, and other components for nightly operations.
 - Conduct scheduled preventive maintenance and update relevant checklists, including:
 - Rubber Roller, Sock Roller, and Lockup Bar service
 - Folder, Cary Reel Stand, Water Fountain System, Main Motor, Dampener Motor
 - Drive Control Panel, Web Break Detectors, and other auxiliary equipment
 - Grease and top up oil on the Folder, Cary Reel Stand, and Printing Units
- Inventory & Reporting**
 - Check and maintain adequate spare parts for presses and auxiliary equipment.
 - Record daily work in the maintenance logbook.
 - Report work on faulty parts requiring replacement to the Maintenance Supervisor.
- Operational Readiness**
 - Inspect all press lines and auxiliary equipment to ensure readiness before each night operation.
 - Verify that sock rollers, water trays, stoppers, folder belts, folder pins, and slitter knives are in proper condition
 - Confirm no cotton rags, tools, or debris remain on machines after servicing.
- Additional Duties**
 - Assist in scheduled waste collection, labeling, and proper storage.
 - Participate in in-house projects such as:
 - Repairing washrooms, air conditioners, pallet trucks, trolleys, and conveyors.
 - Welding, painting, lighting, wiring, piping, cement work, and other building maintenance tasks.

Qualifications & Skill (recommended)

- Technical certificate or diploma in Mechanical/Electrical/Industrial Maintenance (or equivalent experience).
- Hands-on experience with printing press equipment is preferred.
- Ability to work rotating shift and respond to urgent repair calls.
- Strong troubleshooting and problem-solving skills.

2) ENVIRONMENT, SAFETY AND HEALTH OFFICER

Responsibilities:

- Equipment Maintenance & Repair**
 - Responsible for theSun compliance with the relevant governmental authorities legislation and to establish in-house Occupational Safety & Health and Environment policies and procedures.

Requirements:

- To develop in-house Environment, Safety and Health policies and procedures.
- To liaise with all departments on Occupational Safety and Health needs.
- To organize training from time to time in conjunction with external assistance for workers on Occupational Safety & Health and Environment.
- To prepare indexes on industrial accident, medical (Occupational Health issue), environment impact from time to time to measure the organizational climate of the company.
- To identify workplace risk, where necessary, and recommend actions plans to reduce and eliminate safety & health risk and fire hazards.
- To investigate all industrial accidents or near misses and devise effective preventive measures to eliminate repetition.
- To develop, implement and monitor Occupational Safety & Health and Environment training program and conduct in-house training periodically.
- To conduct periodical safety audits.
- To organize and conduct emergency response exercise.
- To develop Medical Surveillance record.
- To liaise with the relevant governmental authorities relating to Environment, Safety and Health issues.
- To keep abreast and advise on any development issues related to Environments, Safety and Health.
- To act as a Chairman in the regular Environment, Safety and Health Committee meeting.
- To prepare monthly ESH report for submission to the Production Management.

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Shubman out to avoid 'mental fatigue'

SHUBMAN GILL said yesterday that his biggest opponent could be 'mental fatigue' after the India Test captain recently took charge of the 50-over side.

Speaking ahead of the second Test against the West Indies in New Delhi, Shubman conceded that it was a challenge to play all three international formats, but that was what drove him.

"Physically most of the time I feel fine, but sometimes there is mental fatigue because you are constantly playing," Shubman told reporters.

"There is obviously a certain expectation that I have from myself." India lead the two-match series 1-0 after they hammered the visitors by an inning and 140 runs inside three days in the first Test.

Immediately after play ended on day three, Shubman was named to succeed Rohit Sharma as ODI captain, adding to his workload. "I think that is the challenge about being able to play all the formats for India," said Shubman.

"And I want to play and succeed in all the formats for the country, and win ICC titles." Shubman, who made his Test debut in December 2020, took over as Test skipper in May from Rohit.

He was India's leading scorer in the drawn five-Test series in England with 754 runs. He was also vice-captain of the Asia Cup-winning T20 team last month.

Turning to the West Indies, Shubman said there would be no complacency as India aim to wrap up the series against a team who are a pale shadow of the side that once ruled the cricket world.

West Indies were swept 3-0 at home by Australia in June and July. But embattled captain Roston Chase said he had been told to "keep believing" by West Indian greats, including Viv Richards, Brian Lara and Richie Richardson who were at an awards ceremony in New Delhi.

"I had the privilege of meeting all three of them and they said the same thing, they told me 'to keep believing,'" said Chase. - AFP

322 Notices

FOCAL PARK SDN BHD (358698-H)

NOTIS LELONG AWAM KENDERAAN UNTUK DILELONG SEPERTI SEDIA ADA

TEMPAT & TARIKH LELONG : Northern Region (Alor Setar, Butterworth & Ipoh)
16-10-2025 (Khamis) Pukul 11:00pagi

TARIKH MELIHAT : SEBELUM TIGA HARI LELONG
(Pukul 9:00pagi - 4:00petang)

PERTANYAAN (Tel): Butterworth 04-3567972, Alor Setar 04-787 7972, Ipoh 05-5293971

FPAC - PELELONG BERLESEN : a) Mr. Chew Wooli Kok , b) Mr. Steven Lim Peng Seng (02097), c) Pn Hasniza Binti Abu Samah (01038)

Alamat : 352, Permatang Tok Jaya Maklom Sg Dua 13800 Butterworth.
: Lot 138-A, Batu 5 Jalan Langgar 05460 Alor Setar
: PT51683, Jalan Jelapang, Kws Perindustrian Tmn Meru 30020 Ipoh

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Item	Reg No	Jenis & Model	Tahun
AM1	ALB1825	HONDA ACCORD VTI-L 2.0	2018
AM2	WNX1733	HONDA CITY 1.5 VTEC (A)	2006
AM3	WWK7219	NISSAN X-TRAIL LUXURY (A) 2.0i	2004
AM4	ALC9335	PROTON PERSONA 1.6	2018
AM5	WC6428L	PROTON PERSONA 1.6	2015
AM6	AKH8995	PROTON SAGA 1.3 CVT	2016
AM7	AKW8646	PROTON ERITGA 1.4 AT EXECUTIVE PLUS	2017
AM8	AEL3591	PROTON WIRA 1.3GL	2001
AM9	AGV172	SUZUKI - S CROSS CVT	2014
AM10	ALG9624	PROTON SAGA 1.3	2019
AM11	ALF7411	PROTON SAGA 1.3 PREMIUM CVT	2018
AM12	WWB1802	PROTON PERSONA 1.6	2011
AM13	WNB3001	TOYOTA VIOS 1.5	2005
AM14	VAH8432	MAZDA CX3 SKYACTIV 2.0 2WD	2017
AM15	PPL5411	MITSUBISHI TRITON 2.5	2019
AM16	JUF9483	PERODUA BEZZA 1.3	2020

(Perhatian: Kenderaan-kenderaan diatas yang tidak dibida dalam perolehan akan dilelong semula pada 23-10-2025)



Holder Sabalenka books semifinal date with Pegula

ARYNA SABALENKA extended her unbeaten run at the Wuhan Open to 20 matches with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Elena Rybakina yesterday, keeping alive her quest for a fourth straight title and setting up a semifinal clash with Jessica Pegula.

In the 13th chapter of a rivalry that has played out on the biggest stages, including the 2023 Australian Open final, it was Sabalenka who struck first against Rybakina by breaking in the eighth game with a scorching forehand winner.

Sabalenka, who won the Wuhan title in 2018-19 and again last year after the tournament returned fol-

lowing the Covid pandemic, clinched the opening set with a hold and broke Rybakina's serve in the first game of the second set to tighten her grip on the match.

The world No. 1 closed out the victory despite a few service wobbles late on, improving her win-loss record against Rybakina to 8-5 and earning a measure of revenge for a defeat by the player from Kazakhstan in their last encounter this year in Cincinnati.

"She's a great player, very nice girl and always tough to play against," Sabalenka said.

"We have a really huge history

against each other, always great battles, and I'm always excited to play her. She always pushes me to the limit. I'm super happy with my performance today, with the win and the support in the stadium.

"I feel a really great connection with Chinese fans I guess. I feel at home every time I'm playing in this stadium. Honestly, it (the winning run) is crazy."

Up next for the big-hitting Belarusian is American Pegula, who came from behind to beat Czech Katerina Siniakova 2-6, 6-0, 6-3 for her 50th match win of the season and boost her chances of qualifying

for next month's season-ending WTA Finals.

Pegula dropped the first set in just over 30 minutes. After logging more than 15 hours on court over the past 13 days, she looked spent.

But she stormed through the second set in just 23 minutes, delivering a bagel to force a decider. She then sealed victory in 1 hour and 36 minutes to reach her first Wuhan semifinal.

Even she couldn't explain how she's endured the grind.

"I don't know," Pegula said after the match. "I guess I'm in really good shape." – Reuters/Agencies

SHORTS

F1 broadcasts overhyped with stars, girlfriends

CARLOS SAINZ has criticised F1's broadcasts of races after the Singapore Grand Prix last week, insisting the coverage goes "overboard showing celebrities and girlfriends."

While individual broadcasters control their overall coverage around a race weekend, the actual on-track footage is controlled by a singular world feed, directed by Formula 1.

The coverage during races regularly cuts to celebrities, girlfriends and family members in the garages, with Sainz's partner Rebecca Donaldson shown in the Williams garage on Sunday.

Yet on the flip side, some fans have voiced their irritation online that Lewis Hamilton's late brake issue, with Fernando Alonso closing in rapidly, was completely missed during the television coverage.

Similarly, Sainz's charge from the back of the field to 10th was also largely absent from the broadcast.

"It's becoming a bit of a trend, which must have worked for them once upon a time, when people found it interesting to see our girlfriends, to see famous people on TV, the reactions," Sainz told Spanish outlet *El Partidazo de Cope*.

"Last weekend they didn't show any of the four or five overtakes I did at the end. Nor did they show Fernando's pursuit of Lewis... they missed a lot of things."

"Don't lose sight of the main thing," Sainz added. "For me, they go overboard a little showing the celebrities and girlfriends."

Schauffele jumps into share of second in Japan

XANDER SCHAUFFELE moved four shots off the lead at the halfway stage of the US PGA Tour's Baycurrent Classic in Japan after carding a sizzling 8-under 63 yesterday.

The American, who played in his country's Ryder Cup defeat to Europe two weeks ago, shot eight birdies against no bogeys at Yokohama Country Club to sit tied for second behind sole leader Max Greyserman.

Two-time major winner Schauffele made a blistering start to his second round, carding five birdies on the front nine including four in succession.

He finished his round with two more straight birdies to leave him in contention for his first title of the year heading into the weekend.

"Yesterday felt like you were just trying to survive the round and at some points it felt like there's almost no wind today," said Schauffele, who finished a blustery opening round on even par.

"If you're hitting good shots you were getting rewarded for them, so I was able to take advantage of a lot of that."

"The plan is not to change anything, just kind of keep doing what we're doing," said Schauffele.

Schauffele was in a share for second on 8-under with Sweden's Alex Noren and American Alex Smalley.

Djoker has cause for concern

Serb battles into semis as Vacherot's fairytale run continues

NOVAK DJOKOVIC said yesterday he was "concerned" about his physical state, but still dispatched Belgium's Zizou Bergs 6-3, 7-5 to set up a Shanghai Masters semifinal against tournament surprise package Valentin Vacherot.

The 38-year-old Serbian, the highest-ranking player left standing, is getting ever closer to a fifth title in the Chinese financial hub despite struggling throughout the week.

Next in the crosshairs of the 24-time Grand Slam champion is world No. 204 Vacherot, a qualifier from Monaco who battled back from a set down to stun Holger Rune 2-6, 7-6 (7-4), 6-4.

"I'm concerned too," Djokovic said when told his fans were worried about his health, adding there were "issues that I'm trying to address day by day."

"I don't want to talk about the details. I'm still in the tournament. So I prefer just focusing on recovery and try to give it all."

Djokovic broke in the sixth game after an unforced error from the 44th-ranked Bergs.

But just days after he overcame exhaustion, vomiting and an injury scare in his last match against Spain's Jaume Munar, he looked tired and overheated.

"There's always something happening with the body, pretty much every match that I play right now," Djokovic said wryly.

He took a puff from an inhaler during a break in play as his team anxiously looked on, but took the first set.

Djokovic broke for a 5-4 lead in the second set, but Bergs broke back after a series of thrilling rallies that drew screams from the crowd.

The umpire had to ask the spectators to quiet multiple times as fans chanted furiously for Djokovic, waving Serbian flags and signs reading "Novak is the GOAT" (greatest of all time).

When Djokovic broke again for a 6-5 lead, the

stadium erupted.

Bergs still would not lie down, saving two match points and creating another break point of his own, but Djokovic finally got over the line when the Belgian went long.

"I've been struggling quite a bit with energy levels, and just every opportunity that I get, the crowd feels it... I can hear that noise and that energy drives me," Djokovic said.

Vacherot, the lowest-ranked player to make the quarterfinals, said it would be "unreal" to face Djokovic.

In stark contrast to the Serb, the 26-year-old said: "What I'm really happy about is my fitness... My body feels amazing."

When he landed in Shanghai, Vacherot was still on the alternate list for the tournament – meaning he wasn't sure he would even get the chance to play in the qualifying rounds.

World No. 11 Rune broke in the third and seventh games to win the first set comfortably. Watched on by his cousin Arthur Rinderknech, Vacherot took a tense tiebreak in the second.

Rune looked increasingly rattled and frustration came to a head in the seventh game of the third set when he received a time violation and committed three unforced errors to hand Vacherot a break.

Vacherot served out to secure an unlikely victory, falling to his knees in disbelief.

"I just kept fighting harder and harder," said Vacherot. "In the end it was just all about nerves and fitness." – AFP



Novak Djokovic in action during his match against Zizou Bergs. – REUTERS/SPIC

Hamilton tipped to get 'back in fight for victory'

BY KIERAN JACKSON

ALPINE F1 boss Flavio Briatore has backed Lewis Hamilton to be "fighting for wins" again next year despite a difficult first season with Ferrari.

Seven-time F1 world champion Hamilton joined Ferrari amid much fanfare after 12 years and six titles at Mercedes, but has struggled in Scuderia red.

The 40-year-old has not finished on the podium in his first 18 races for Ferrari, with his only table-topping moment coming when he won the sprint race in China back in March.

Hamilton is under contract at Ferrari until the end of next year – when new engine and chassis regulations could shake up the pecking order in the sport – and long-term rival Briatore believes the British driver will be back amongst the top

contenders in 2026.

"Sooner or later, he'll solve the problems," Briatore told Italian radio channel *Rai Radio 1*.

"He's a very good person but F1 is very complicated today, with seven cars within two tenths of a second. This year, the only truly competitive team is McLaren."

"Next year, everything will change, and we'll (Alpine) be fighting for the podium too. You'll see, with the new cars, Hamilton will be back in the fight for victory. He's always great."

Briatore was Renault boss when Hamilton debuted in F1 in 2007 for McLaren and has been the long-term manager of one of Hamilton's greatest rivals, Fernando Alonso.

Hamilton is currently sixth in the drivers' championship, 48 points off teammate Charles Leclerc, and has never gone a whole season

without a podium in his 18-year F1 career.

In addition, Ferrari have not gone a whole season without a race win since 2021, with Leclerc registering five podiums this year but also unable to secure a victory thus far.

Briatore, meanwhile, rejoined Alpine, the sports car brand of Renault, last year but has struggled to generate results during his 15 months in charge.

Alpine are rooted to the bottom of this year's constructors' championship with just 20 points, while Franco Colapinto has failed to score a point since replacing Jack Doohan as Pierre Gasly's teammate in May.

Colapinto's seat for 2026 is under threat, with reserve driver Paul Aron in contention to replace him. The next F1 race of the 2025 season is the United States Grand Prix (Oct 17-19) in Austin, Texas. – The Independent

Uninspired Oranje

... but Koeman waves away critics after easy win over Malta

THE NETHERLANDS anticipated criticism after an uninspired 4-0 away win over Malta in World Cup qualification yesterday, but coach Ronald Koeman was having none of it after his side took a step closer to next year's finals.

Television pundits, immediately after the away game, and yesterday's newspapers bemoaned an uninspired performance from the Dutch, who went three points clear of Poland and Finland in the Group G standings with three matches to play.

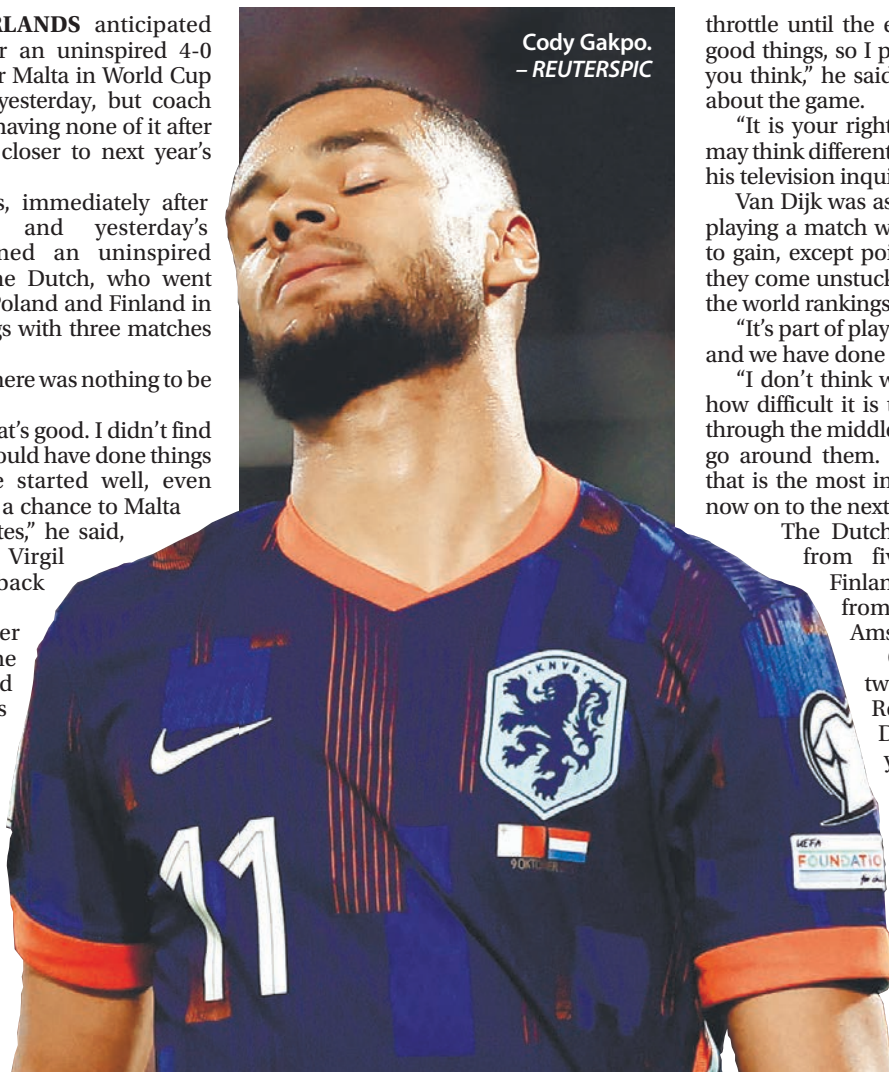
But Koeman said there was nothing to be critical about.

"We won 0-4, so that's good. I didn't find it frustrating, but we could have done things better. I thought we started well, even though we gave away a chance to Malta in the opening minutes," he said, referring to captain Virgil van Dijk's sloppy back pass.

"Jurrien Timber played very well in the build-up. He freed himself a few times towards midfield and then we were able to find our people there.

"After that, I thought, because they also started to put a lot of pressure, that we should have found solutions faster.

"Then the pace went down. But we gave maximum



Cody Gakpo.
– REUTERS/PIC

throttle until the end. There were a lot of good things, so I pay less attention to what you think," he said after a critical question about the game.

"It is your right to look at it critically. I may think differently, right?" Koeman asked his television inquisitor.

Van Dijk was asked whether he enjoyed playing a match when the Dutch had little to gain, except points, and much to lose if they come unstuck against a team 166th in the world rankings.

"It's part of playing international football and we have done our duty," he responded.

"I don't think we should underestimate how difficult it is to play polished football through the middle. We tried, but we had to go around them. But we secured victory, that is the most important thing. We won, now on to the next one."

The Dutch, who sit on 13 points from five games, next meet Finland, who have 10 points from six games, in Amsterdam on Monday.

Cody Gakpo converted two penalties while Tijjani Reijnders and Memphis Depay also scored in yesterday's match.

Gakpo converted the first spotkick after 12 minutes and the second four minutes into the second half before teeing up Reijnders for their third goal in the 57th.

Depay netted a header in stoppage time to wrap up the points. – Reuters

Amoura scores twice as Desert Foxes qualify for World Cup

MOHAMED AMOURA scored twice as Algeria beat Somalia 3-0 yesterday to become the fourth qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup from Africa after Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt.

The Wolfsburg striker volleyed a Riyad Mahrez cross into the net on six minutes.

Then the former Manchester City winger slammed a loose ball into the net midway through the opening half.

Mahrez turned creator again on 57 minutes, setting up Amoura to stretch the lead to three goals.

Coach Vladimir Petkovic, convinced that qualification was assured, then substituted both scorers.

It was a predictable outcome in Oran as the Desert Foxes are 163 places above the Ocean Stars in the world rankings.

Algeria have 22 points in Group G with

one round remaining, holding a four-point cushion over second-placed Uganda. Mozambique lie third, followed by Guinea, Botswana and Somalia.

Algeria will be making a fifth World Cup appearance when they travel to the 2026 tournament, which the United States, Canada and Mexico are co-hosting.

After first round exits in the 1982, 1986 and 2010 tournaments, they reached the second round at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, losing 2-1 to eventual champions Germany.

Elsewhere, Ryan Ogam scored after 73 minutes to give Kenya a 1-0 win over Burundi in a fiery east African derby in Bujumbura, where the home side had to play with 10 men for all but six minutes.

Forward Bonfils-Caleb Bimenyimana was shown a straight red card after fouling

Kenya goalkeeper Brian Okoth, whose injury forced him off to be replaced by Bryne Odhiambo.

The incident set the scene for a tense first half, when Kenyan Manzur Suleiman committed a studs-up foul, furious Burundians surrounded the referee, appealing for the yellow card to be changed to red.

Despite holding a numerical advantage, Kenya struggled to impose themselves in attack until first-half added time when Jonathan Nahimana made a brilliant one-hand save from a long-range shot.

But the brave resistance of the Burundian Swallows finally broke when Ogam netted to lift the Kenyan Harambee Stars to third, eight points behind leaders and reigning African champions the Ivory Coast. – AFP

Clarke praises Scotland's character

■ BY RONNIE ESPLIN

STEVE CLARKE claims the Scottish public should "love" their national team following Scotland's remarkable 3-1 never-say-die win yesterday over Greece at Hampden Park.

Scotland should have been three or four goals down against the slick visitors in the 2026 World Cup qualifier before Konstantinos Tsimikas eventually fired Greece in front in the 62nd minute – and the Tartan Army were not impressed.

However, goals from Ryan Christie, fellow midfielder Lewis Ferguson and substitute Lyndon Dykes turned the game and took Scotland on to seven points from three Group C fixtures, behind leaders Denmark on goal difference, ahead of the visit of Belarus on Monday.

Greece beat Scotland 3-0 in the Nations League playoff in March to relegate the Scots to League B – but this victory put the hosts in a strong position to make next year's World Cup finals.

Clarke praised his side's tenacity and determination.

"I have talked before about the character of this group," said the former Scotland defender, who will be without suspended Christie and Ferguson on Monday with defender Aaron Hickey doubtful because of knee injury.

"The Scottish public should love to have them. They never know when they're beat.

"They want to be remembered as a really successful group of players and hopefully they're on their way to doing that by getting to another tournament. "But it is three points and we have another game on Sunday and we have to make sure we get three points there as well.

"We are still focused on where we are trying to get to. Defensively this was a tough night for us as the Greeks were very good in possession.

"There were slick with their movement and speed of pass. We didn't get enough high pressure.

"But the shackles came off when they scored – and that comes from the determination from within the group to make sure it wasn't going to be another disappointing night here at Hampden.

"Sometimes you don't get what you deserve in football and sometimes you get a little bit more than you deserve, but don't underestimate the work the players put into the first part of the game.

"The last time Greece came here, they were slick in the first half and went in 2-0 up.

This time they were slicker than us again, but it was 0-0.

"We didn't give a goal way in the first 10 seconds of the second half so that helps. It took them longer to get themselves in front.

"Football is a 96 or 97 minute game now. You have to work through the tough moments and stay in control.

That's what we did tonight. "In the bad moments we worked to keep the game level or tight.

Then we managed to get the goals we needed that ultimately secured us the win." – The Independent

SHORTS

Czechs hold on for draw against Croatia

THE Czech Republic battled to a goalless draw in their World Cup qualifier against Croatia yesterday, holding off the group leader's who poured on the pressure in the final minutes in search of a winner. Both teams defended with discipline throughout the match as they looked to avoid big mistakes with players quickly shutting down attacks in dangerous areas and not giving up many goal-scoring chances.

The Czechs, learning their lesson from a 5-1 away drubbing by Croatia in June, pressed high from the start with midfielder Pavel Sulc missing an early opportunity with a shot straight at Croatian keeper Dominik Livakovic.

Ivan Perisic spurned a pair of chances in the

opening half for the visitors, including a shot from inside the penalty area that he fired over the goal. He later missed a header that he nodded straight into the keeper's hands.

Croatia, which marked coach Zlatko Dalic's 100th match in charge of the national side, wore the Czechs down in the second half. The result leaves both sides top of Group L with 13 points but with Croatia ahead on goal difference.

Haiti down Nicaragua to go top

HAITI swept past hosts Nicaragua 3-0 yesterday to move to the top of Group C in the final round of 2026 World Cup qualifying for North and Central America and the Caribbean (Concacaf).

Duckens Nazon, Danley Jean Jacques and Loucius Deedson scored for Haiti, who bagged their first win of the final round.

Nazon put the visitors up 1-0 in the 12th minute,

seizing upon a loose ball in the box and slotting home from close range.

Jean Jacques headed home a corner to double their lead in the 35th minute. Deedson struck in second half stoppage time to move Haiti to five points.

With an edge on goal difference over Honduras, who played to a scoreless draw with Costa Rica in San Pedro Sula. That result, in a scrappy match that saw few significant scoring chances, dented Costa Rica's chances of advancing to the 2026 finals in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Denmark hit Belarus for six

STRIKER Rasmus Hojlund and substitute Anders Dreyer both netted twice as Denmark roared to a 6-0 win over Belarus in their World Cup qualifying clash yesterday that leaves them top of Group C on goal difference.

Victor Froholdt gave the Danes the lead in the 14th minute and the 19-year-old turned provider five minutes later, steering the ball into the path of Hojlund for a close-range finish to make it 2-0.

Hojlund doubled his tally before the break, reacting quickest as Patrick Dorgu's shot came back off the post to steer the ball into the net, and he set up Dorgu for the fourth goal in the sixth minute of first-half stoppage time.

The second half brought no improvement in Belarus's fortunes. Dreyer added a fifth in the 66th minute, and he scored again with a shot that squirmed under the body of goalkeeper Fedor Lapoukhov 12 minutes later to complete the rout.

The Danes top Group C on seven points, ahead of Scotland on goal difference. Scotland beat Greece 3-1 at home. The Greeks are third on three points, with Belarus bottom of the group having failed to secure a point so far.



BY PHIL BLANCHE

No pain, no gain

England friendly just what Wales needed, says Bellamy

CRAIG BELLAMY defended his choice to play England after Wales were brushed aside 3-0 at Wembley. Many Wales fans had questioned this "Battle of Britain" friendly fixture just four days before their vital World Cup qualifier against Belgium on Monday (Tues 2.45am Malaysian time).

But Bellamy insisted Wales would gain more than lose from a sobering Wembley night when they trailed by three goals inside 20 minutes.

"I wanted this game, I needed to see where we are," Bellamy said after Wales were sunk by goals from Morgan Rogers, Ollie Watkins and Bukayo Saka.

"I can play Lithuania or someone if you want – and that's no disrespect to them – but we'll have loss of the ball and try to break them down.

"Where do we want to go? Who do we want to be? Even now that fills me more with motivation, more hunger.

"That physical profile, speed, duels (of the

England players), that's where you want our players to be. I want them to feel that.

"This is where we want to be, but we know we have to play at the top to be up against these teams. I want our egos to be hurt, I like us to be annoyed, but Monday is a different game.

"You don't go anywhere being damaged. Once you get your a*** kicked you learn the most, and I got my a*** kicked."

Wales goalkeeper Karl Darlow had made one fine save before Rogers punished dozy defending in the third minute.

It got worse for Wales eight minutes later as Watkins tapped home from close range before

Saka bent home a beauty from just inside the box.

Bellamy said: "The first 20 minutes was tough. It's a very difficult place to come without starting the way we did.

"We made it very difficult for ourselves and we had to suffer a lot of pain.

"You look at what makes us a good team when we're not a good team. Stress, full stadium.

"That's why it was so important to get this game because we will get stressed and we will get tested.

"It's not the first time because we were 3-0 down against Belgium (Wales fought back to

level in Brussels before losing 4-3). Belgium and England are at that top table – and we're not there.

"To give ourselves a big chance we have to stick to what we do. That's why these games are so beneficial."

Wales did improve in the second half, although England arguably had taken their foot off the gas.

David Brooks and Chris Mepham were both denied by excellent Jordan Pickford stops as Wales sought a consolation goal.

Bellamy said: "I quite enjoyed half-time. I was like, 'Now we see.' We can hide. What are we going to do? We gave examples of what we can do better, but it's also who you are.

"When those moments happen, it shows who you are as a coach as well. You can come in bawling and throwing stuff, but to who? It makes no sense.

"It's not exactly planned and what I'd like, but I'm already looking forward to Monday." – The Independent



Tuchel lauds 'fantastic' Pickford

England's Jordan Pickford (centre) and teammates celebrate after the match against Wales yesterday. – REUTERS/PIC

ENGLAND MANAGER Thomas Tuchel praised Jordan Pickford's composure and adaptability after the goalkeeper set a record with his eighth consecutive clean sheet in his country's 3-0 victory over Wales in a friendly match at Wembley yesterday.

The 31-year-old surpassed the record he had previously shared with England great Gordon Banks to become the first keeper to achieve eight successive shutouts in 90-minute appearances for the England men's team.

England stormed to their eighth straight win against Wales, with goals from Morgan Rogers, Ollie Watkins and Bukayo Saka effectively ending the contest within 20 minutes.

Tuchel, who took charge of England in January, commended Pickford's ability to remain sharp after being largely untested for long stretches of the game.

"It's not easy to stay focused in a dominant first half like that. Have basically nothing to do," Tuchel said.

"And then suddenly, I think in the 42nd minute, there's situation where it always can be dangerous. And second half, he had a very difficult save to close his legs very fast.

"He's a fantastic shot stopper. There is no doubt about it. Today there was a challenge for him because they pressed us high. And we want to escape the pressing.

"We want to have the chance to escape the pressing, also with short passes, and not only with long shots from him. So, he did very well.

"He kept his composure. He

kept calm. This is basically what we demand of him. He stayed calm, kept his focus."

The German also praised Pickford's ability to adapt to his tactical demands.

"It's like, always a team effort, and I think he's happy to share this with at least the defenders in front of him. But with a defensive approach that we make it the least saves possible from him, but he's doing good," Tuchel added.

"Well done, congratulations. Fantastic achievement." – Reuters

Rooney plays down Gerrard's 'egotistical losers' comment

ENGLAND legend Wayne Rooney does not think recent squads have a better attitude than his so-called golden generation – and says his team just "didn't quite manage to get over the line".

Ex-Three Lions captain Steven Gerrard made headlines this week when he said their lack of success was down to key players being "egotistical losers".

Gerrard, who played for England 114 times between 2000 and 2014, added "we weren't a team".

But Rooney, speaking on his BBC podcast *The Wayne Rooney Show*, did not quite see it like that.

Rooney played 120 times for England, scoring a then record 53 goals, between 2003 and 2018.

Neither Gerrard nor Rooney ever got to a semifinal with England – but the Three Lions have reached two European Championship finals and a World Cup semifinal since.

"Obviously, we didn't win anything," said ex-

Manchester United forward Rooney.

"I wouldn't quite put it that way but I know what he's saying. There was a lot of big characters in the dressing room.

"I wouldn't say (England squads now have a) better attitude. That's disrespectful to us as players because we worked hard, we tried. We didn't quite manage to do it.

"Even when you look back with the players we had could we have done better? We could have but it wasn't to be."

He continued: "What you have now is (rival teams') players training (together) before they go back to pre-season together – Phil Foden and Marcus Rashford for instance.

"It's a different generation. The big thing is the media coverage of it is much better. The players get on better with the media. From the outside that gives a better feeling."

Gerrard, speaking as a guest on the *Rio Ferdinand Presents* podcast, said several former

Manchester United and Liverpool players get on better now as pundits than they ever did as England teammates.

"I didn't feel part of a team. I didn't feel connected with my teammates, with England," he said.

In response, Rooney said: "It (was) difficult to have that relationship with Liverpool and Man Utd players. It's easier now.

"I speak to Steven all the time (now). You can have better relationships now because you can have a beer together and relax more.

"I was fine with everyone, I got on with everyone. I was aware Becks (David Beckham) and Gary Neville and Scholesy (Paul Scholes), you could see they weren't going to be close to the Liverpool players.

"But one thing for sure is everyone worked hard for each other. I don't think that was an issue. We just didn't manage to get over the line. I didn't see that at all." – Agencies

Saudi billionaire pours cold water on United deal

SAUDI ARABIAN billionaire Turki Al-Sheikh has dismissed rumours that he is in discussions with Manchester United about a potential takeover.

On Thursday, the tycoon suggested that the Red Devils were nearing an agreement with a new investor.

On X, he posted: "The best news I heard today is that Manchester United is now in an advanced stage of completing a deal to sell to a new investor... I hope he's better than the previous owners."

His post, shared with his seven million followers, quickly went viral. It amassed over five million views, 12,000 likes, 3,500 shares and nearly 2,000 responses.

However, yesterday, Turki clarified his comments. He stated: "My yesterday's post about Manchester United's potential sale meant one thing: the club is in an advanced negotiation phase with a new investor.

"Just to clarify, I am not the investor, nor are they from my nation. I'm posting this as a fan who wishes the deal to happen, though it might not necessarily happen."

United were taken aback by the initial claim. Just before Turki's tweet on X, an interview with Sir Jim Ratcliffe was published, where he gave no indication of plans to step down at Old Trafford.

Speaking on *The Business* podcast, produced by *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, British billionaire Ratcliffe insisted that he remains at the helm of football operations at United.

Turki's social media activity naturally caused a stir among the club staff. Ratcliffe also hinted that he'll continue to oversee football operations for the foreseeable future, alluding to his long-term strategy.

While there are no deals presently active, there is history between the Glazer family and Saudi Arabia.

In 2017, United agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the country's General Sports Authority (GSA).

When the contract was announced, United said the aim was to help the GSA develop its football industry, as part of its 2030 Vision, to diversify its economy, and the club would be "lending its business and sporting expertise to clubs, sporting authorities and individuals in Saudi Arabia".

In 2008, United signed a lucrative five-year sponsorship deal with Saudi Telecom, which was extended by a further five years in 2013.

These deals gave rise to speculation about a Saudi buyout of the Glazer family but United sources repeatedly played down the rumours and no deal materialised. – Express Newspapers/Agencies

RESULTS

WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

EUROPE

Group C: Scotland 3 (Christie 64, Ferguson 80, Dykes 90+3) **Greece 1** (Tsimikas 62), **Belarus 0** **Denmark 6** (Froholdt 14, Hojlund 19, 45, Dorgu 45+6, Dreyer 66, 78).

Group G: Finland 2 (Kallman 48, Marhiev 55) **Lithuania 1** (Sirvyas 25), **Malta 0** **Netherlands 4** (Gakpo 12-pen, 49-pen, Reijnders 57, Depay 90+3).

Group H: Austria 10 (Schmid 7, Arnautovic 8, 47, 83, 84, Gregoritsch 24, Posch 30, 42, Laimer 45, Wurmbrand 76) **San Marino 0**, **Cyprus 2** (Laifis 45+1, Pittas 90+7-pen) **Bosnia and Herzegovina 2** (Katic 10, Michael 36-og).

Group L: Faroe Islands 4 (Sorensen 16, 55, Roganovic 36-og, Frederiksberg 72-pen) **Montenegro 0**, **Czech Republic 0** **Croatia 0**.

AFRICA

Group F: Burundi 0 Kenya 1.

Group G: Somalia 0 Algeria 3, Mozambique 1 Guinea 2, Botswana 0 Uganda 1.

Group H: Liberia 3 Namibia 1.

CONCACAF: Nicaragua 0 Haiti 3, Honduras 0 Costa Rica 0.

Asian Cup Qualification: Lebanon 2 Bhutan 0, Syria 5 Myanmar 1.

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLIES: England 3 Wales 0, Uzbekistan 2 Kuwait 0, Poland 1 New Zealand 0, Morocco 1 Bahrain 0.

Big payday for Tang Jie, Ee We

NATIONAL SHUTTLERS Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei received a RM460,000 windfall on Thursday following their feat in capturing the mixed doubles title at the 2025 World Badminton Championships on Aug 31.

The Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) contributed RM300,000 towards the reward, with Yonex chipping in RM100,000 and Affin RM60,000 as a symbol of appreciation towards the pair's historic success, which elevated Malaysia's name on the world stage.

Their success ended nearly two decades of waiting, as Malaysia's previous best achievement in mixed doubles was when Koo Kien Keat-Wong Pei Tty reached the semifinals at the 2006 edition in Madrid, Spain.

Tang Jie, 27, said he enjoys the "pressure" that comes with being world champions because the important thing for them is to enjoy every game.

"I feel that the past is the past. So, for us, when we go on the court, we still have the hunger to win.

"So, there is no difference in how we think, even though we are already world champions. We are eyeing more success," he told reporters after the mock cheque presentation at Akademi Badminton Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

National mixed doubles coach Nova Widianto also received RM15,000 from BAM for his role in grooming the pair into world champions, while six national mixed team support staff were also rewarded with a total of RM18,000 for their behind-the-scenes contributions.

Meanwhile, national women's doubles pair Pearly Tan and M. Thinaah also received a total of RM192,500 reward in appreciation of their silver medal feat at the world meet.

Of the total, BAM forked out RM112,500 while Yonex and Affin contributed RM50,000 and RM30,000 respectively.

BAM president Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz said the award ceremony symbolised their recognition and appreciation of the sacrifices made by players and coaches. - Bernama

This one's for you!

Cklamovski dedicates Malaysia's victory over Laos to local football fans

NATIONAL TEAM head coach Peter Cklamovski dedicated Malaysia's 3-0 victory over Laos in their 2027 Asian Cup Qualifiers Group F match to Malaysians, saying the result was meant to inspire hope and belief among local football fans.

Cklamovski said his players demonstrated their strong commitment to the team with passion and discipline throughout the match, capping their dominance with second-half goals from Arif Aiman Mohd Hanapi, captain Dion Cools and substitute Mohamad Faisal Abdul Halim.

"Tonight's match was for the Malaysian people. We wanted to give Malaysians hope and inspiration through the way we played and make them believe we can achieve something special.

"I think millions at home saw it with their eyes, the passion, the commitment, the discipline that the players have for the national team. I'm very proud of all the players, all the groups,"

he told a post-match press conference at the New Laos National Stadium in Vientiane, on Thursday night.

He also expressed his gratitude to Ultras Malaya and travelling supporters who turned up in numbers to cheer for the team, whose chants could be clearly heard over the television broadcast.

"They helped us big time. They saw it with their own eyes what the passion the players have to play for their country," the 47-year-old Australian tactician added.

Commenting on the playing surface, Cklamovski admitted that the pitch conditions were not ideal as the ball was bobbling throughout the match but noted that it was still better than some Malaysian Super League pitches.

Malaysia, who were without seven players following a recent suspension from the International Federation of Association Football (Fifa), started with an energetic display and made several dangerous attempts on the oppo-

nent's goal early on.

After an entertaining first half, the long-awaited goal finally arrived when a low drive from winger Arif Aiman successfully beat Laos goalkeeper Kop Lokphathip in the 53rd minute.

As the Laotian defensive discipline began to wane, Cools doubled the lead, firing in his second goal of this qualifying campaign to strengthen Malaysia's position in the 68th minute.

Substitute winger Mohamad Faisal completed Malaysia's 3-0 victory by also getting his name on the scoresheet well into second-half stoppage time.

Cklamovski's men will host Laos in the return leg at the National Stadium, Bukit Jalil, next Tuesday.

After three matches, Malaysia now leads Group F with nine points, followed by Vietnam in second place (six points), Laos in third (three points), and Nepal at the bottom without any points. - Bernama

Learn from mistakes, time to reset FAM

THE biggest question now is not just who is at fault but to what extent we have truly learned from past mistakes.

That should be a common reflection as the domestic football arena is still struggling with the shock following the decision of the International Federation of Association Football (Fifa) to impose sanctions on the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) and seven national players recently.

The decision of the world football governing body is not only a blow to FAM, but also tarnishes Malaysia's image in the eyes of the international community.

Although there is still room for FAM to appeal, the black episode indirectly shows how weak the system of checks and balances is in the administration of the most popular sport in this country.

For those who have been following the journey of local football for a long time, the disappointment is no longer surprising but has now turned into deep fatigue.

However, from every crisis, there is an opportunity to rectify the situation.

In this context, FAM needs to see Fifa's punishment not just as a burden but as a call to change.

Every major organisation may have gone through dark moments, but the only difference is whether they dare to use it as a starting point for real reform or simply bide their time to repeat the same mistakes.

First, FAM needs to prioritise the principle of accountability because in an increasingly open world, the time for hiding weaknesses is over.

The people are no longer passive spectators, they are now observers who demand transparency and accountability.

Therefore, every important decision must be accompanied by clear explanations, transparent facts and a willingness to accept criticism.

Second, there needs to be a cultural change in the organisation as modern football demands professional governance, not administration based on relationships or position.



In other words, competence must be above loyalty and merit must overcome name.

FAM must also dare to utilise external expertise including experienced professionals in sports law, finance and strategic communication.

Third, sports leaders need to return to exemplary values of humility, honesty and a people's heart.

A football leader cannot only appear when winning but must stand up when mistakes are made.

The courage to admit mistakes is a sign of moral strength and that is an example that will be respected by players, supporters and the people.

In addition, FAM also needs to strengthen its relationship with clubs, states and grassroots.

Football development cannot only depend on short-term projects or image campaigns on social media because it starts in village fields, schools, academies and a stable league system.

If the grassroots are weak, how can the "tree" of national football be able to stand strong.

In the broader context, all parties in the football ecosystem including coaches, players, media

and supporters also play a role.

Constructive criticism is more valuable than empty praise.

Likewise, honesty in reporting, professionalism in management and loyalty to the right principles - all are the basis for rebuilding the people's confidence in this sport.

In the meantime, we must not forget that football belongs to the people.

It lives because of the passion, support and trust of those who never stop giving hope to the national squad.

So every action by FAM, every decision made should be based on that trust - not on individual interests or temporary image.

This Fifa-FAM crisis should be a mirror to all - that every negligence in management not only affects the organisation but also affects the dignity of the country.

However, if FAM is able to rise with new determination, be open to reform and restore the people's trust, perhaps from this crisis a new generation of leadership will be born that truly understands the meaning of trust.

Ultimately, football is not just a game. It is a reflection of our values as a nation - about discipline, responsibility and dignity.

If FAM really wants to restore the people's trust, this is the time to act with true courage and honesty.

Quoting local football analyst Datuk Dr Pekan Ramli, the issue should not be allowed to linger and demands that some party step forward to shoulder responsibility, while not ruling out the possibility of a "reset" in FAM if the situation demands it.

"This issue cannot end here, those involved either individually or collectively in the national squad or FAM should resign.

"The struggle to elevate the national team must continue. FAM affiliate members cannot continue to be silent followers, they need to have the courage to speak up or they should also step down," he said. - Bernama

Penang Silambam team crowned world champions

THE Penang Silambam team has once again made the nation proud by emerging as the overall champions at the 2025 World Silambam Open Championship, in Doha, Qatar, last week.

Penang Silambam Association secretary G. Suseela said the nine-member team delivered an outstanding performance, clinching nine gold, five silver, and three bronze medals.

She said that five gold medals were garnered in the *Thanithiramai* (solo performance) events, while another four golds came from the *Poruthal* (combat) category.

"The Penang Silambam team represented Malaysia for the first time at this championship and were also named runners-up based on

points collected and group champion.

"This success is the outcome of hard work, discipline, dedication, and a strong fighting spirit among the athletes, all driven by the desire to make Malaysia proud on the global stage," she told Bernama.

Suseela said all the contestants who took part were Penang state athletes from the Malaysia Games (SukmaA) contingent, which included four men, namely K. Eimaiyan (aged 16), T. Hemkiishen (14), S. Vickynewaran (21), and R. Prakash (31).

The five women athletes were B. Darnisha (16), R. Bavana (20), O. G. Thareenni (15), V. R. Raneeshaa (16), and M. R. Rinnisha (19).

She said 11 countries, including Malaysia, took part in the championship, among them Qatar, India, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United States, and Singapore, with the Indian team posing the most formidable challenge.

Suseela added that this was the team's best achievement at the global level, following their success last December when they were crowned overall champions at the Asian Silambam Open Championship, also in Qatar.

She said the athletes underwent six months of intensive training under the guidance of coach P. Ravindran, in addition to competing in various national-level tournaments. - Bernama



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SCAN ME

Silence not golden

Tuchel lambasts 'silent' England fans after big win over Wales



Ollie Watkins (right) scores England's second goal during a friendly match against Wales at Wembley Stadium, London yesterday. – REUTERS/PIC

THOMAS TUCHEL called out England fans for being "silent" inside Wembley after a routine 3-0 friendly win over Wales.

The German head coach risks a backlash from the English fanbase after making it clear wasn't happy with the atmosphere inside the national stadium.

The Three Lions raced to a three-goal lead inside just 20 minutes thanks to finishes from Morgan Rogers, Ollie Watkins and Bukayo Saka but the 7,000 Wales fans were louder than the supporters of the hosts.

Speaking to *ITV* post-match, a bemused Tuchel said: "We had one and a half training days to prepare against a well-trained team and we did very, very well."

"We had an excellent first half. We were 3-0 up very quick. We could have

been 4-0 or 5-0 up at halftime. Very, very good. We couldn't score the fourth and the fifth ones.

"The stadium was silent. Silent. We never got any energy back from the fans and I think the players delivered a lot, to get more from the stands.

"It was difficult to keep everything going in the second half. We did excellent. We deserved to win."

Asked if he expected more from the crowd, the honest 52-year-old did not hold back as he said: "Yeah. What more can you give in 20 minutes than three goals?"

"And the way we attacked Wales and didn't let them escape in their own half, with ball win after ball win after ball win.

"If you then hear for half an hour just Wales fans, it's a bit sad because the team deserved big support today."

There has already been criticism of the FA of late for England having a

German manager rather than a homegrown boss. And that means Tuchel's interview risks him receiving more criticism in the coming days.

Tuchel added, when quizzed about goalscorer Rogers: "He is what he is. He is a No. 10 and he fights for his place. He is at the moment ready and an important player. He has everything what it takes and is in a good way.

And asked what he thought of a Harry Kane-less England side, the former Chelsea manager explained: "We are ready for any team effort.

"Serbia was the next example of teamwork and team effort. We created a lot of chances. We did not convert any chances.

"We could have used Harry, like all the time, but like I said we need to play without Harry and Jude (Bellingham) if the guys are injured. There is no excuse and we will find solutions.

"Today we had solutions and I think we played an excellent first half. Forgiving the fact we only had one and a half days to prepare, it was very good.

"We had chances in the second half, Morgan and Anthony Gordon had two big chances and we could have scored.

"You need maybe a goal to keep the whole thing going again. We tried to get some impact from the bench but it was not easy, Honestly the effort was always there so no harm done.

"I can assure you, Wales are a complicated team to play against. They're very well drilled and very well trained.

"The work we put in in the first half to not let them escape deserves a lot of credit for our players and I'm very happy."

Rogers scored his first England goal and when asked where it ranks

among his career milestones, the Aston Villa attacker said: "Right at the top.

"It's a proud moment to do it at home too in a home nation derby. Yeah, a dream come true. It's a nice feeling.

"The quality of players we've got, the people who are here and the people who are not here, you can never be too comfortable and think you've got a role, or someone will take your place. It's about keeping progressing and performing and showing what I can do."

Fellow scorer Saka added: "It's been a while. I've missed a few camps so I'm really happy to be back and on the scoresheet as well.

"It's nice. It meant everything to me. We moved the ball quick. The game plan we had worked. We had to be patient and pick our moments and we did." – Express Newspapers

Djoker has cause for concern

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This one's for you!

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