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theSun office administrator Sharminie Ravindaran and her family all decked out for the Festival of Lights outside their home in Seri Kembangan, Selangor. – *ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN*

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theSun wishes all Malaysians
'Selamat Deepavali'.

Stand against graft, division

Prime minister calls on Malaysians to embrace light of Deepavali as collective aspiration for truth, justice and good governance.

page 2

INSIDE

page 3 — *'Recent incidents involving adolescents manifestations of long-brewing problem.'*

page 4 — *Ampang Jaya to have new municipal animal shelter to house, rehome stray cats.*

page 5 — *Strategy to boost police presence in schools to be implemented soon.*



PM: Let Deepavali be time to reject graft, division

'Malaysia's multiracial harmony must be safeguarded from those exploiting race and religion for political gain'

BY **FAIZ RUZMAN**
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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has called on Malaysians to let the light of Deepavali symbolise a collective stand against corruption, greed and division, saying that the festival's true meaning lies in illuminating truth, justice and good governance.

"Every year, we celebrate the Festival of Lights, yet some remain in darkness. Light represents truth, justice and goodness. To reject darkness is to reject corruption. That is the true meaning of Deepavali."

Speaking at the Madani Deepavali Open House themed *Cahaya Madani, Sinar Perpaduan* held at KL Sentral yesterday, Anwar said Malaysia's multiracial harmony must be safeguarded from those exploiting race and religion for political gain.

"We often take our harmony for granted, but outsiders see how extraordinary it really is.

"Our parents saw Hari Raya, Deepavali, Chinese New Year and Christmas as part of our shared culture. In celebrating them, we lose nothing. We gain unity."

Anwar warned that divisive politics is threatening national stability and is increasingly visible, even in parliamentary debates.

"From the *kampung* to the city and even in Parliament, certain divisive issues are raised. If allocations to Penang are slightly higher because its majority is non-Malay, they attack immediately.

"But when Kelantan or Terengganu get similar funds, no one says a word."

He said democracy has no meaning if voters continue to be misled by those who misuse on racial and religious sentiments.

"The pull of racial sentiment is often stronger than reason."

On governance, Anwar said reform requires perseverance and integrity to rebuild public trust.

"For decades, money was plundered and stolen. Corruption was rampant. Now, we have proven that in just over two years, we could recover RM15.5 billion that was misused.

"That money was meant for the people, not politicians with houses in London and Australia," he said to applause.

Taking aim at the Opposition, Anwar said it is ironic that those responsible for past mismanagement now portray themselves as champions of integrity.

"The Opposition likes to talk about good governance but it's laughable when those who caused the mess now claim to be the guardians of reform."

On education, Anwar said increasing university placements is part of government efforts to address long-standing concerns about admission opportunities for Indian students.

"I agree with what our colleagues in the Unity government have done. Let us find a resolution to this ongoing problem for the last two decades, namely the anxiety of bright Indian students who cannot secure university placements."

He added that the government had approved 1,500 new matriculation and STPM placements without reducing existing Malay quotas.

"And that's why in my Budget speech, I also mentioned STPM, because STPM has now become a stream attracting Malay, Indian and Chinese students alike. So, we must give top-performing STPM students a chance to enter university, with 1,500 new places in fields such as accountancy, engineering, medicine, digital and language studies."



Anwar, his wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and Gobind among guests at the event at KL Sentral yesterday. – *AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN*

RM42m allocated to empower Indian community

KUALA LUMPUR: The government has approved RM42.25 million to support the Indian community through education, digital access and poverty eradication programmes under the Madani framework, said Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo.

He said the allocation, announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on Thursday, reflects the Unity government's commitment to ensuring equitable opportunities and social inclusion across all communities.

"These initiatives are part of our continuous efforts to assist the Indian community through education, technology and community empowerment," Gobind said at the Madani Deepavali Open House held at KL Sentral yesterday.

He said the allocation includes RM8 million for the *Kalvi Madani* free tuition programme to benefit students in 200 Tamil national-type schools, the *Peranti Siswa* laptop distribution initiative and school repair and maintenance works under the Malaysian Indian Community Transformation Unit.

Gobind said RM3.5 million has been channelled through Bank Simpanan Nasional for the Hardcore Poverty Eradication Programme while RM20 million was allocated under the *Dharma Madani* initiative to empower houses of worship to serve as community and cultural hubs.

"These programmes ensure that the light of opportunity reaches those who need it most, through education, technology and social empowerment.

"As the nation progresses into the digital age, we must ensure that technology connects us, not separates us. No one should be left behind because of where they live or what their background is."

Gobind said the government's digitalisation drive is guided by values of trust, responsibility and collective wellbeing.

"The government is committed to digitalising public services, strengthening digital trust, protecting citizens' data and enhancing cybersecurity.

"Every step we take must ensure that technological progress goes hand in hand with human values and shared prosperity."

He said the allocations underscore the Madani government's holistic approach to development, one that balances economic progress with inclusivity, equity and social cohesion. – By ***FAIZ RUZMAN***

More Admiralty courts to be set up

KOTA TINGGI: The government plans to set up new Admiralty courts near major ports nationwide to manage the increasing number of maritime law cases.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said said with only one such court currently operating in Kuala Lumpur, expanding this capacity is crucial for the efficient resolution of maritime cases.

Azalina said locations under consideration include southern Johor, Sabah and Sarawak as well as Langkawi or Penang, Bernama reported..

"Transport Minister Anthony Loke has proposed that the Transport Ministry and the Legal Affairs Division collaborate on the matter.

"If we intend to table new maritime legislation in next year's Parliament session, we must first establish the court structure," she said after a handover ceremony for the new Pengerang court yesterday.

The Pengerang MP said increasing the number of Admiralty courts is a preliminary step ahead of the Transport Ministry's plan to table new maritime legislation in Parliament early next year.

She added that the court infrastructure is vital to ensure that the new laws could be enforced effectively once they are enacted.

She said while some argue that the number of maritime cases remains low, the reality points to a steady increase, in tandem with growing sea trade.

Cuepacs proposes options to improve Grade N1 scheme

IPOH: Cuepacs has proposed three options to the Public Service Department to improve the Grade N1 Administrative and Finance Assistant Scheme, in line with the current qualifications of civil servants.

Its president Datuk Dr Adnan Mat said the first option involves making the existing administrative assistant scheme obsolete, and aligning it directly under Grade N5, similar to adjustments made to several other schemes in previous reviews.

"Many administrative assistants now hold higher qualifications such as diplomas, degrees and even master's and PhD qualifications, yet they remain at the basic N1 grade, which corresponds to the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia salary level.

"With this alignment, their scheme will better reflect their actual responsibilities, which have now far exceeded their original job scope," he said after attending the Amalgamated Union of Employees in Government Clerical and Allied Services (Auegcas) Fun Run yesterday.

Present were State Human Resources, Health, Indian Community Affairs and National Integration Committee chairman A. Sivanesan and Auegcas president Hazani Hamzah.

Adnan said the second option is to allow a one-off grade increase to N5 for those with higher academic qualifications, in line with the approach outlined in Service Circular No. 1 of 2016.

"The third option is an automatic grade promotion to N5 after a minimum of 15 years service under the N1 grade." – Bernama

Move to resolve child-related court cases within a year

KOTA TINGGI: The government will introduce a new SOP to ensure that all court cases involving minors are resolved within a year, said Minister in Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said.

She said the guidelines would be launched on Oct 24 at the Palace of Justice as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the judicial system for children.

She said the measure is also intended to address court delays that could cause child witnesses to be reluctant to testify again once they reach adulthood.

"We want all cases involving children, whether they are the accused or the victim, to be resolved within one year.

"Our focus is clear – cases involving child perpetrators or victims must be prioritised. This is a principle that the chief justice and the chief judge of Malaya have agreed upon," she said after the handover ceremony for the new Pengerang court yesterday.

She added that the government has adopted several measures to expedite cases involving minors, such as specialist evidence-taking vans to simplify recording testimony from underage witnesses.

She also said the proposed smartphone ban for students aged 16 and below, as recommended by the Cabinet, should be viewed in tandem with the enforcement of existing legal instruments designed to protect the safety and welfare of children. – Bernama

'Educating children shared responsibility'

PEKAN: Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar said the responsibility of educating children does not rest solely on teachers but must be shared collectively by parents and the community.

"Education starts at home, within the family, where parents must understand their children. When the child goes to school, teachers must also get to know them.

"But within the community, we too must play a role. If all this time, people have thought that education is the sole duty of teachers, that is not true. It is a shared responsibility," he said after a Madani school adoption event at Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Temai yesterday.

SK Temai was chosen as a foster school under the Energy Commission through the Madani School Adoption Programme, providing school staff with various benefits and support in both education and welfare assistance.

He said the government remains committed to improving the education system, including ensuring that schools are safe environments that help shape students into better individuals. – Bernama

Fresh call to address mental health in youths

BY **T.C. KHOR**
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Acts of extreme violence often stem from years of emotional neglect rather than sudden impulses, says psychiatrist

PETALING JAYA: The alleged murder of a 16-year-old schoolgirl by her 14-year-old schoolmate has reignited calls for urgent government action to address what experts warn is a worsening mental health crisis among Malaysian youths.

Island Hospital and Penang General Hospital child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr Wong Yim Chan said mental health professionals have long sounded the alarm on the issue.

"Recent violent incidents are the visible result of a long-brewing problem.

"One in six children have mental health problems, and the number has doubled since 2019," he told *theSun*.

Wong said acts of extreme violence often stem from years of emotional neglect rather than sudden impulses.

"Adolescence is a volatile stage of emotional and cognitive change. Teenagers understand consequences but struggle to control impulses. The combination of impulsivity, peer pressure and social isolation can set the stage for reckless or aggressive behaviour."

Referring to the recent case, Wong said the suspect described himself in a note as the "main character" in a video game and referred to others as "NPCs" (non-player characters).

"If you're an NPC, you're not supposed to have feelings."

He said detachment reflects poor emotional development and a lack of empathy, often fuelled by anger and frustration.

"When someone feels small, he may try to feel big by controlling others," he said, adding that this desire for dominance drives most bullying behaviour.

He cautioned against simplistic solutions or harsh punishment.

"Does caning teach kindness? No. The child doesn't learn to be kind."

On social-media use, Wong urged regulation rather than prohibition, alongside education on responsible online behaviour.

He also called on the education and health ministries to embed "social emotional learning" in schools to teach empathy, anger management and conflict resolution while training teachers to identify early warning signs.

Wong said Malaysia's shortage of mental health professionals compounds the crisis.

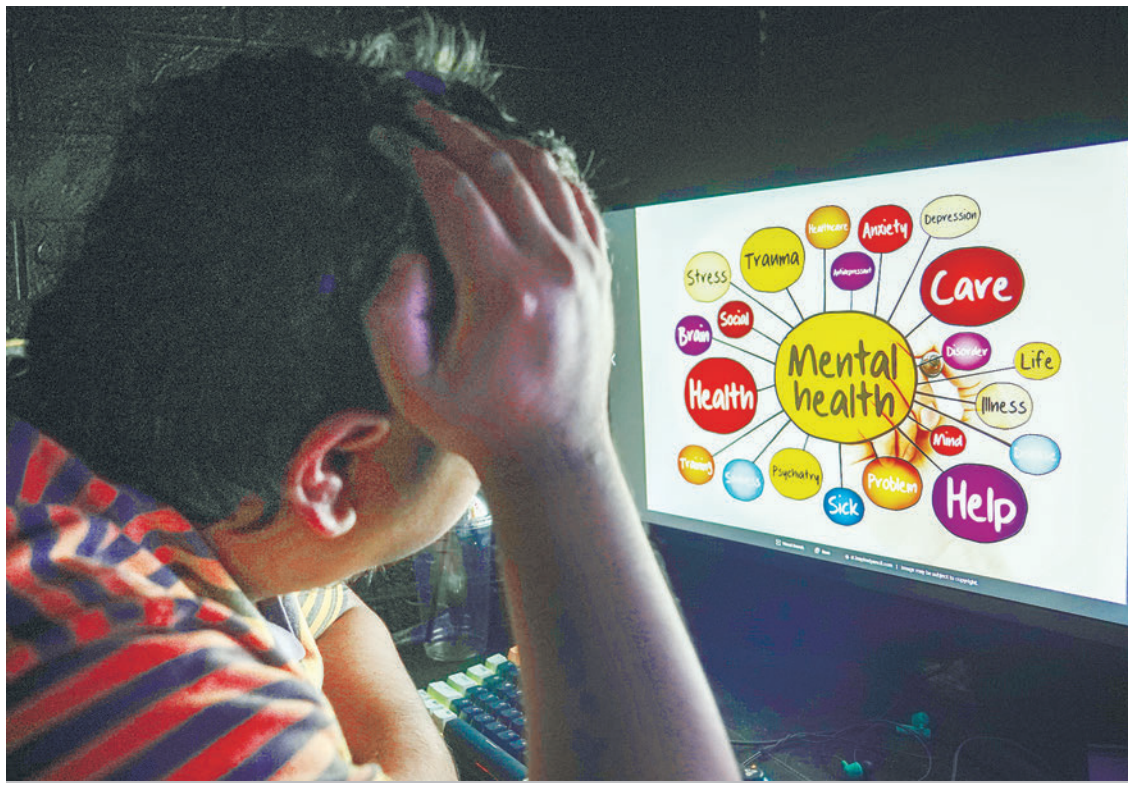
"There are only about 40 child and adolescent psychiatrists nationwide. We urgently need more specialists, counsellors and structured coordination among the education, health and welfare sectors."

He said more resources must be channelled into mental health services, warning that the recent case serves as a grim reminder of the cost of inaction.

"Every case is different but the pattern is clear – low empathy, social rejection, distress and no adult intervention until it's too late."

On Oct 11, a 14-year-old student at SMK Bandar Utama 4 in Petaling Jaya allegedly stabbed a 16-year-old schoolmate in a toilet.

Reports said the victim was stabbed multiple times in the neck, chest and legs before being left inside a locked cubicle.



Wong said adolescence is a volatile stage of emotional and cognitive change. – *AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN*

Proposed Character Education subject not viable: Group

BY **FAIZ RUZMAN**
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PETALING JAYA: The government plan to introduce Character Education, a new subject in schools by 2027, has drawn concern from the Parent Action Group for Education, which urged the Education Ministry to first strengthen the existing Moral, Civics and Religious Studies curricula before adding another subject.

Its founder Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim said while the initiative to instil moral values among students is commendable, introducing a new subject without fixing existing weaknesses may repeat past mistakes.

"Adding another subject to an already packed schedule may not be justifiable as it would take away valuable time from other lessons."

The proposed Character Education subject forms part of the Education Ministry's 2027 curriculum revamp aimed at fostering integrity, empathy and civic-mindedness among students, amid growing concerns over bullying, indiscipline and youth violence in schools.

Noor Azimah said if current subjects have failed to meet the objectives, the issue lies in implementation rather than content.

"There must be proper monitoring and data tracking. Introducing a new subject to replace moral-building lessons only points to the failure of existing ones.

"How can we be assured that this new subject would achieve its objectives when there is no evidence that the current approach has been evaluated effectively?"

She said character development requires a whole-of-school and community effort, not just another classroom subject.

"Discipline frameworks must be strengthened and discipline teachers should be trained in conflict management and early intervention.

"Every school should also have qualified counsellors to provide timely emotional and psychological support to at-risk students."

Noor Azimah said digital citizenship and media literacy must also be made central to value-based education to cultivate empathy, accountability and responsible online behaviour.

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New cat shelter marks milestone for animal welfare

Municipal council, SPCA and partners join forces to build safe haven and promote compassion, responsible pet care

BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
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AMPANG JAYA: A new municipal animal shelter will soon be built in Ampang Jaya to protect, treat and rehome stray cats, a move hailed as a milestone in the fight against animal cruelty and neglect.

The project was announced during the World Animal Day celebration jointly organised by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) Selangor and the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council.

The event, graced by Tengku Permaisuri Selangor Tengku Permaisuri Norashikin, also aimed to promote compassion and responsible pet ownership under the Stray Free Selangor initiative launched in 2017.

SPCA Selangor chairman Christine Chin said World Animal Day serves as a reminder to honour the animals that share our lives and to address ongoing welfare concerns in Malaysia.

"One of our main worries is how municipal councils manage stray populations and the animals they catch.

"Through our Potong Royong fund, SPCA works with veterinarians to conduct spay-neuter programmes for councils and local communities," she said.

Chin urged more councils to allocate funds to help feeders and low-income pet owners neuter their animals.

"We're promoting a holistic approach, spay and neuter, adopt responsibly and act with compassion. When you're kind to animals, you become a better citizen," she said.

She reminded the public that animal cruelty, including poisoning strays, is a punishable offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2015.

"Poisoning animals is both cruel and illegal. Offenders must be held accountable, but we also need education so communities learn to coexist with animals."

Chin added that kindness towards animals could also extend to lifestyle choices.

"Being kind to animals isn't just about rescuing them, it can also mean eating less meat. Small changes can save many lives," she said.

She welcomed the council's move to set up the cat shelter, adding that SPCA is advising on its design, quarantine areas and animal care standards.

"Municipal councils must understand proper animal management, including quarantine, veterinary checks, vaccination and rehoming.

"We hope volunteers would come forward to help care for and rehome the cats."

The new cat shelter, to be built along Jalan Ayer Lama, is part of efforts to enhance animal welfare while fostering a cleaner and more compassionate community.

The RM485,000 project is funded through the council's development charge and public amenities contribution, and will be supervised by the council's Building and Architecture Department.

Scheduled for completion by July 2026, the shelter will occupy 0.145ha and accommodate up to 50 cats at a time.

It will provide rescued cats with protection, medical treatment and care before adoption.

At the event, Berjaya Land deputy chairman Datuk Seri Robin Tan contributed RM30,000 in support of the SPCA initiative.

With backing from the Veterinary Services Department, SPCA Selangor and the Cat Club of Malaysia, the council's cat shelter will stand as a testament to love, empathy and civic responsibility – a step forward in building a truly caring city.



Tengku Permaisuri Norashikin (centre), accompanied by Chin, presenting a token of appreciation to Tan during the event. – *ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN*

MACC sets up Sabah election monitoring team

KUALA NERUS: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has formed a monitoring team to ensure the 17th Sabah state election is conducted transparently and free from abuse of power.

MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki said the team comprises about 40 officers from the commission's headquarters to strengthen on-the-ground monitoring throughout the election period.

"We have already set up a team in the state. I have also sent officers from the headquarters to oversee the election and ensure the process is not marred by abuse of power, corruption or fraud.

"Sabah is vast and there are many areas to be monitored, which is why we established the team. We also have a monitoring system to facilitate checks in all involved areas," he said after the Student Anti-Corruption Volunteer Corps Cadet award ceremony at Sultan Zainal Abidin University yesterday.

Azam added that an election operations room would be established in Kota Kinabalu as the main centre before being expanded to other districts.

He also said MACC would work with police to ensure compliance with the Election Offences Act 1954.

"We are collaborating with other agencies, especially police, to exchange information. It should be remembered that both the MACC and police have powers under the Election Offences Act, so cooperation between the two is vital," he said.

On Oct 6, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor announced the dissolution of the Sabah State Legislative Assembly to pave the way for the polls.

The assembly has 79 seats, with 73 contested and six appointed members.

The Election Commission (EC) has set Nov 29 as polling day.

EC chairman Datuk Seri Ramlan Harun announced that nominations will take place on Nov 15, with early voting scheduled for Nov 25. – Bernama

Umno to contest only in seats with high winning potential

KOTA KINABALU: Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has confirmed that the party will only field candidates in constituencies with strong winning potential in the 17th Sabah state election.

He said Sabah Umno has been granted autonomy to select candidates based on its own arrangements.

"However, we must recognise that we will only contest in state seats with the potential to win, and priority will be given to candidates proposed by Sabah Umno.

"We have received up to five potential names, but we must first assess the candidates and constituencies. What matters most is that the candidates can win," he said after officiating at the Mooda@Desa X PNG Carnival: Penanak Culture Sabah at Pantai ODEC Universiti Malaysia Sabah yesterday.

Ahmad Zahid added that discussions have been held with Pakatan Harapan (PH) to avoid overlapping seat contests in the upcoming polls.

"Yes, we have discussed it with PH to prevent any overlap in seats, but talks and negotiations are ongoing with Gabungan Rakyat Sabah," he added.

When asked about a court decision on 40% federal revenue entitlement for Sabah, Ahmad Zahid said the government must respect the ruling.

"We will review the decision and allow the prime minister to present the matter to the Cabinet for discussion." – Bernama

MCA to field natives in election

GEORGE TOWN: MCA will field Sabahan candidates who genuinely understand the needs and aspirations of the people in the upcoming 17th Sabah state election, said party president Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong.

He added that the candidates will comprise individuals born and raised in Sabah, with strong local roots and proven service records in their constituencies.

"What is important is that they are well-known in their areas and have long served the community," he said after attending the Penang MCA annual general meeting yesterday.

Wee said the list of MCA candidates for the Sabah polls has been discussed at the Barisan Nasional level and is pending final approval before being announced.

He added that the official announcement is expected to be made before Nov 15, which is nomination day, while the launch of the election machinery is scheduled about a week earlier. – Bernama

127 statements recorded over stabbing case

KUALA LUMPUR: Police have recorded statements from 127 individuals, including friends of the suspect, to assist in the investigation into the tragic death of a 16-year-old student who was fatally stabbed at a secondary school in Bandar Utama on Tuesday.

Petaling Jaya police chief ACP Shamsudin Mamat said police are awaiting the full post-mortem report from the pathology department.

"Usually, the full report can be obtained within a month or sooner, but the longest is around three months," he said in a statement.

He added that the 14-year-old male suspect, who is a Remove Class student at the same school, has been remanded until Oct 21 to assist in the investigation under Section 302 of the Penal Code for murder.

On Wednesday, Selangor police chief Datuk Shazeli Kahar said the cause of death was stab wounds to the chest and neck, based on the results of a post-mortem conducted at the University of Malaya Medical Centre.

The victim's body was claimed by her family after the post-mortem was completed. – Bernama

Man remanded over assault on former varsity VC

GEORGE TOWN: A man arrested for allegedly assaulting former Universiti Sains Malaysia vice-chancellor (VC) Tan Sri Prof Emeritus Dzulkifli Abdul Razak during an attempted robbery in Taman Pekaka has been remanded for seven days to assist in investigations.

Northeast district police chief ACP Abdul Rozak Muhammad said the 52-year-old local man has been remanded until Oct 24.

The suspect, who has 13 criminal records, with 10 related to narcotics offences, is under remand as police carry out further investigations into the case, he said in a statement yesterday.

The case is being investigated under Section 394 of the Penal Code for voluntarily causing hurt in committing robbery.

The incident occurred at about 6.45am on Friday when Dzulkifli, 74, was returning home from a mosque after performing dawn prayers.

Penang police chief Datuk Azizee Ismail said the attack left the victim with head injuries that required 16 stitches.

Police arrested the suspect in Bayan Baru at about 2.30pm the same day.

In a statement shared by Universiti Utara Malaysia on its official Facebook page, Dzulkifli, who is also former rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia, was said to be safe and recovering from the trauma of the incident. – Bernama

Cops in schools strategy to be implemented soon

Initiative includes enhancing patrols under 'omni-presence' concept and introducing programmes to create criminal activity awareness among students, says minister

ALOR GAJAH: A new police strategy to strengthen their presence in schools will be implemented soon, said Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

He said the move followed the Cabinet's directive for the ministry, through police, to increase patrols in school areas as part of efforts to curb juvenile crime.

"We need to enhance patrols under the concept of 'omni-presence', which means ensuring police are visibly present at schools," he said after officiating at the Malaysian Registrar of Societies Symposium here yesterday.

Saifuddin Nasution said police would also introduce more creative programmes to raise awareness among students about criminal activities.

"This means police must follow up with more frequent visits and have direct engagement with schools. It should go beyond casual visits or brief stops. They must be more creative by conducting various engagement sessions, structured visits, inspections and providing advisory services to all stakeholders."

He said the Home Ministry, through police, would also step up patrols and police presence in support of the government's newly introduced digital safety policy for students.

He added that the initiative forms part of a comprehensive approach involving education, prevention and enforcement.

Another key focus is strengthening the role of school liaison officers in guiding students on discipline and cybersecurity, alongside intensified safety awareness campaigns with the Education Ministry and parent-teacher associations (PTA).

"The ministry supports a holistic approach that prioritises youth-friendly mental health support systems in schools and communities, with clear enforcement against device misuse, cyberbullying and digital exploitation," he said in a statement.

Saifuddin Nasution also emphasised the need for continuous monitoring and policy adjustments to keep pace with evolving technology, Bernama reported.

Additional efforts include engagement with stakeholders such as the Education Ministry, Health Ministry, PTA NGOs and digital platforms.

"Robust digital literacy education is essential to develop ethical and responsible students in the virtual world.

"Platform accountability and safety-by-design principles are crucial to ensure technology companies also protect underage users," he added.

Saifuddin Nasution stressed that student digital safety is not merely a school discipline issue but a national responsibility requiring cooperation among the government, educational institutions, communities, parents and the technology industry.

He said the measures aim not to restrict freedom but to safeguard the future of Malaysia's youth, ensuring they grow up in a safe, disciplined and mentally and digitally healthy learning environment, in line with the Malaysia Madani aspiration.

On Friday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced the Cabinet's proposal to ban smartphone use for students aged 16 and below to address school safety concerns.

The ban aims to curb disciplinary problems, negative social media influence and online gaming, which often lead to bullying and criminal behaviour in schools.



Saifuddin Nasution said the measures were not aimed to restrict freedom but to safeguard the future of youths. – *MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN*

Policeman among 12 held on suspicion of sex trafficking

KUALA LUMPUR: A policeman was among 12 individuals arrested on suspicion of trafficking seven Indian national women for sexual exploitation, during a raid at a hotel in Jalan Ampang recently.

Bukit Aman Criminal Investigation Department director Datuk M. Kumar said apart from the 34-year-old police officer, the other suspects included a 63-year-old local man and 10 Indian nationals – six men and four women – aged between 21 and 58.

He said they were arrested in special operation Ops Pintas (Sexual Exploitation), conducted by the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Division at 1am on Sept 30.

"On Oct 16, the investigation papers were referred to the Attorney-General's Chambers, which approved charges against five detainees, including the police officer suspected of being a member of the syndicate, under Section 12 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007.

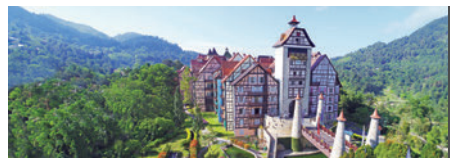
"Additionally, five foreign nationals were charged under Section 6(1)(c) of the Immigration Act 1959/63 for not possessing valid travel documents," he said in a statement, adding that the accused were charged at the Criminal Sessions at the Jalan Duta Court Complex on Friday.

Kumar said seven Indian women, aged 25 to 40, were rescued during the raid. They had been lured to Malaysia with the promise of working as domestic helpers, only to be forced into sex work.

"The victims were kept under tight control by the syndicate members, with some beaten and threatened for refusing to follow orders," he said.

Kumar also issued a stern warning that police will not tolerate human trafficking, vowing that decisive action will be taken against all perpetrators, without exception.

He urged the public to come forward with any information related to such activities by contacting the nearest police station. – Bernama



Giving up corporate lure to answer divine calling

Top graduate declines job offers to continue family legacy to serve and coordinate affairs at country's first glass temple

JOHOR BAHRU: As Deepavali nears, the dazzling glass mosaics of the Arulmigu Sri Rajakaliamman Glass Temple once again light up Johor Bahru, casting a glow of serenity and wonder over visitors from all walks of life.

Founded in 1922, the temple has long stood as both a sacred space and a cultural landmark, renowned for its intricate architecture and message of unity. Its walls, ceilings and floors are adorned with nearly 300,000 pieces of coloured glass – a feature that earned it a place in the Malaysia Book of Records in 2010 as the nation's first glass temple.

Behind its splendour is 26-year-old S. Maheshwara, a top student who scored 10As in his SPM and graduated with a degree in Finance and Business Management from the University of Reading Malaysia.

Despite receiving several corporate job offers, including in Singapore, Maheshwara chose an unexpected path – to continue his family's three-generation legacy at the temple.

"There was an invisible hand that seemed to pull me back to this temple. I knew this was my life path," he said.

Now serving as temple treasurer and coordinator for its many affairs, Maheshwara views his decision as an act of faith and service.

"Some may see my choice as irrational. But for me, this is the most meaningful way to contribute. I am not doing this for money, this is my form of worship," he said.

The temple, led by his father S. Sinnathamby, recently underwent a RM2 million restoration, completed in March last year after a two-year delay due to the pandemic, Bernama reported.

The extensive work included rebuilding the *gopuram* (temple tower) and replacing 90% of its glass mosaics with new materials imported from Thailand and China.

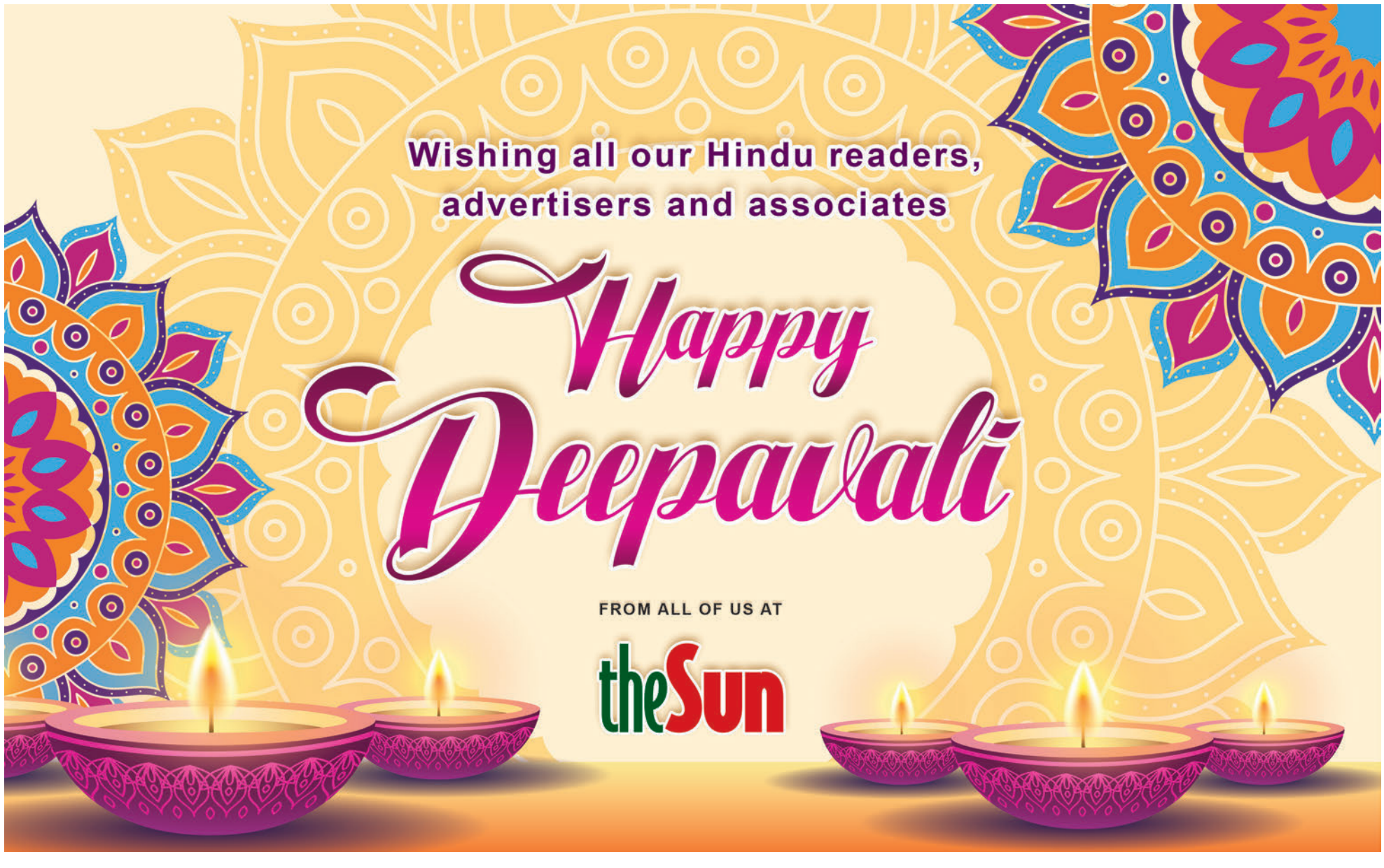
"Each piece of glass holds its own unique significance," said Sinnathamby, describing the meticulous process that often required the team to work late into the night.

With Deepavali being celebrated tomorrow, preparations are in full swing to welcome thousands of devotees. The temple will serve free vegetarian meals to visitors regardless of race or religion.

"The light of Deepavali doesn't just come from lamps or glass. It comes from the compassion, values and unity we build together," Maheshwara said.



Maheshwara said it is his life path to serve at the temple, which is renowned for its intricate architecture and message of unity. – *BERNAMAPIC*



COSWAY
Enriching Lives The Smarter Way

Thai, Cambodia talks inch forward

BANGKOK: Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow met his Cambodian counterpart in Malaysia on Friday to discuss the border issue.

The Thai Foreign Ministry said Sihasak undertook a working visit to Malaysia at the invitation of Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, in the capacity of Asean chair.

"Sihasak took part in the four-party consultations between Malaysia, the United States, Thailand and Cambodia, following up on consultations held in New York on Sept 26 and in Malaysia on Sunday," the ministry said on Friday.

The ministry said Thailand stressed the importance of making concrete progress on issues such as the withdrawal of heavy weaponry, joint demining efforts, combating transnational crime and cooperation in the management of border areas.

The meeting was chaired by Mohamad and attended by Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Seri Amran Mohamed Zin.

This was the second four-party consultations meeting after the first one, which was chaired by Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail on Sunday.

Thailand and Cambodia are working towards lasting peace along their 817km border, which has long been a source of disputes.

Tensions most recently escalated into a military confrontation in the Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear border areas on July 24.

Both governments subsequently agreed to defuse the situation, which has been closely monitored by Malaysia, as Asean chair, as well as the United States and China. – Bernama

Thousands flee Philippine coast

MANILA: Thousands of residents of a Philippine island left their homes along the Pacific coast yesterday as weather experts warned of coastal flooding ahead of the approach of *Tropical Storm Fengshen*.

The eye of the storm was forecast to brush past Catanduanes, an impoverished island of 270,000 people, later in the day with gusts of up to 80kph.

Fengshen will bring heavy rainfall, along with a "minimal to moderate risk" of coastal flooding from 1-2m waves being pushed ashore by the disturbance, the weather service said.

More than 9,000 residents of Catanduanes moved to safer ground, the provincial disaster office said, in a well-rehearsed routine on the island that is often the first major landmass hit by cyclones that form in the western Pacific Ocean.

The Catanduanes provincial government ordered local officials to "activate evacuation plans" for residents of "high-risk areas", including the coast, low-lying communities and landslide-prone slopes.

The neighbouring provinces of Sorsogon and Albay also called for pre-emptive evacuations. – AFP

S. Korean scam centre returnees to be probed

64 led away by police at airport

SEOUL: A group of 64 South Koreans detained in Cambodia over alleged online scam operations returned home yesterday, with most expected to face investigations.

Their return followed the alleged murder of a Korean college student who was tortured in Cambodia in August in a case linked to an employment scam.

Some returnees wore caps and masks and were escorted by police after their arrival at Incheon Airport, their hands appearing to be handcuffed but covered with cloth.

South Korea this week issued a "code-black" travel ban for parts of Cambodia and dispatched high-level officials to help nationals lured into working in scam compounds and secure the release of those held against their will.

More than 1,000 South Koreans are believed to be among about 200,000 people of various nationalities involved in the scam compounds in Cambodia, National Security Adviser Wi Sung-lac said on Wednesday.

President Lee Jae Myung on Friday ordered an urgent removal of online illegal job advertisements – not only for Cambodia but also for Southeast Asia as a whole – to stem the flow.

Second Vice-Foreign Minister Kim Jina told reporters at the airport that the repatriation "confirmed the Cambodian government's continued crackdown" on scam operations and its close cooperation with Seoul.

"Our government will build and actively use an effective system to eradicate scams targeting South Koreans," she said.

A senior police official said Cambodian authorities had agreed to notify Seoul of arrests of South Koreans and send them to South Korea to face justice under South Korean law.

The official said authorities would focus on uncovering the structure, scale and networks behind the scams, often involving voice-phishing operations.

The United Nations estimates the scam centres in Southeast Asia generate billions of dollars in revenue for criminal networks every year, targeting victims around the world through phone and online scams. – Reuters



Police officers escorting repatriated South Koreans at Incheon International Airport yesterday. – *AFPPIC*

Myanmar recaptures key Shan state town

YANGON: Myanmar military said yesterday it had recaptured a town on a highway to China from an armed group.

Following a 16-day operation, "Tatmadaw reoccupied Hsipaw on Thursday", *Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper said, referring to the military by its Burmese name.

Northern Shan state has been rocked by fighting since June last year when rebels renewed an offensive along the highway to China's Yunnan province.

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) captured the military base in the town of Hsipaw last October after weeks of fighting.

Hsipaw is normally home to about 20,000 people and sits on a highway from Myanmar's second city Mandalay to the China border, along which hundreds of millions of dollars of trade travels annually.

There were 28 clashes and "engagements" in the two weeks leading up to Hsipaw's recapture, the newspaper said, with the military recovering 13 bodies of rebels.

TNLA Department of News and Information channel on Telegram reported 29 people had been killed in the latest military offensive.

The military has been fighting a myriad of rebels and "People's Defence Forces" opposed to its rule since it seized power in a February 2021 coup, ending a brief experiment with democracy.

Since the coup, the TNLA, one of Myanmar's most powerful armed groups, has strengthened its control of a swathe of Shan territory, seizing a dozen key towns and a ruby-mining hub.

Fighting between the TNLA and the military caused widespread destruction in Shan state's Kyaukme township, another key town on the trade route from Mandalay to the Chinese border, when the military retook control of it early this month. – AFP

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Afghanistan, Pakistan hold peace talks in Doha

Truce extended

KABUL: A high-level delegation from Afghanistan left for peace talks with Pakistan yesterday in Doha, an Afghan government spokesperson said, after the countries extended a ceasefire on their fierce border clashes.

"As promised, negotiations with the Pakistani side will take place in Doha," Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement, adding that the Kabul team was led by Defence Minister Mullah Muhammad Yaqoob.

A Pakistani delegation was already in the Qatari capital on Friday for the talks and was to be joined by more senior officials, three government and security officials told Reuters.

The government in Islamabad has not confirmed its participation in the talks. Pakistan's defence and foreign ministries did not respond to requests for comment.

Pakistan and Afghanistan on Friday extended the 48-hour truce for the duration of the Doha talks, sources said, as they seek to resolve the clashes that have killed dozens and wounded hundreds over the past week in the worst violence between the two South Asian nations since the change in government in Kabul in 2021.

The fierce ground fighting between the onetime allies and Pakistani airstrikes across their contested 2,600km frontier were triggered after Islamabad demanded that Kabul rein in gunmen who had stepped up attacks in Pakistan, saying they operated from Afghanistan.

Violence in Pakistan has been a major irritant in its relationship with the Afghan authorities.

On Friday, a suicide attack near the Afghan border killed seven Pakistani soldiers and wounded 13, security officials said.

"The Afghan regime must rein in the proxies who have sanctuaries in Afghanistan and are using Afghan soil to perpetrate heinous attacks inside Pakistan," said Pakistan army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir yesterday while addressing a graduation ceremony of cadets.

The Afghan government's spokesperson said Pakistan had conducted airstrikes in Afghanistan hours after the ceasefire was extended.

He condemned the strikes, saying Kabul reserved the right to respond but that Afghan fighters had been directed to refrain from retaliating to maintain the status of and respect for its negotiating team.

The Pakistani military did not respond to a request for comment on the airstrikes. – Reuters

Israel identifies remains of hostage

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said yesterday that the body of a deceased hostage Hamas returned on Friday has been identified as 75-year-old Eliyahu Margalit.

The Israeli military "informed the family of the abductee Eliyahu Margalit that (the body of) their loved one has been returned to Israel and his identification has been completed", Netanyahu's office said in a statement.

It said "we will not compromise and will spare no effort until we return all of the fallen abductees, down to the last one".

The remains of the hostage who died in captivity were transferred to Israeli security forces in Gaza via the Red Cross, and returned to Israel for identification at a medical analysis centre, the premier's office said on Friday night.

The Israeli military said yesterday that the remains had been returned to Margalit's family.

Margalit was killed at Kibbutz Nir Oz on Oct 7, 2023.

"Eliyahu, 75 years old at the time of his death leaves a wife, three children and grandchildren. His daughter, Nili, was also abducted and returned (under) the hostage release agreement in November 2023," the statement said.



Members of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Palestinians watch as workers use a bulldozer to search for bodies in Khan Younis. – *AFPPIC*

"Hamas is required to fulfil its part of the agreement and make the necessary efforts to return all the hostages to their families," it said.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said in a statement on Friday that the group "continues to uphold its commitment to the ceasefire agreement ... and it will continue working to complete the full prisoner exchange process".

Under the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas spearheaded by US President Donald Trump, the group has returned all 20 surviving hostages and the remains of 10 out of 28 known deceased individuals.

Under the terms of the agreement, Hamas is required to return all the hostages, whether dead or alive. – AFP

Jailed former Republican lawmaker walks free

WASHINGTON: Disgraced former Republican lawmaker George Santos, who was convicted of committing wire fraud and identity theft, left prison on Friday just hours after his sentence was commuted by President Donald Trump, his attorney said.

Trump wrote in a post on Friday that "George has been in solitary confinement for long stretches of time and, by all accounts, has been horribly mistreated".

"At least Santos had the courage, conviction and intelligence to always vote Republican," he said.

"Therefore, I just signed a commutation, releasing George Santos from prison immediately."

Santos left the Federal Correctional Institution Fairton in New Jersey and was "on his way home", his attorney Joseph Murray said by phone on Friday.

A presidential commutation is different to a pardon in that the original conviction stands – but the sentence passed is reduced.

The 37-year-old former representative from New York state reported to prison in July, after being sentenced to seven years and three months in April for stealing campaign donors' identities and using their credit cards, among other charges. – AFP

Nobel laureate Chen Ning Yang dies, aged 103

BEIJING: Chen Ning Yang *(pic)*, a world-renowned scientist and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Physics, died yesterday in Beijing at the age of 103, Chinese state media said.



His death was attributed only to "illness" in a report by state broadcaster CCTV.

Born in Hefei in the eastern Chinese province of Anhui, Yang moved to the United States in the 1940s to pursue higher education.

He later held various teaching positions in the country, obtaining US citizenship before reportedly giving it up in 2015.

Yang shared his 1957 Nobel prize with his colleague Tsung-Dao Lee for their joint work in upsetting the principle of conservation of parity as a fundamental law of nuclear physics.

He is also regarded for the Yang-Mills theory – a mathematical framework for describing the way force-carrying particles interact – developed in the early 1950s alongside US physicist Robert Mills.

In his later years, Yang taught at Beijing's elite Tsinghua University, where he made "important contributions to cultivating and recruiting talent and promoting international academic exchanges".

Yang's first wife, Chih Li Tu, died in 2003. In December of the following year, the then 82-year-old married graduate student Weng Fan, then 28. – AFP

Make a deal, Zelensky told

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday to make a deal with Russia.

Trump said as recently as last month that he believed Ukraine could take back all its territory but a day after agreeing to meet President Vladimir Putin for a new summit, the American had changed his tune, although Zelensky did not rule out Trump changing his mind again.

After meeting Zelensky at the White House, Trump said on social media that their talks were "very interesting and cordial, but I told him, as I likewise strongly suggested to President Putin, that it is time to stop the killing and make a deal".

"They should stop where they are. Let both claim victory, let history decide," he posted online, while flying to his Florida estate.

Upon landing, he told reporters that Ukraine and Russia should "stop right now at the battle line."

"Go by the battle line wherever it is or else it gets too complicated." – AFP

theSunday Special

OCTOBER 19, 2025



ALSO INSIDE

The taste that tells a story

Rhythm of roots

Your brain called – it's tired of multitasking

Deepavali

Where light conquers shadow



Under the light of Deepavali

BY **HANNEF ESQUANDER**

ONE of the most wonderful aspects of festivals and celebrations in Malaysia is the spirit of sharing. Regardless of race or religion, everyone participates in their own way in the celebration. Whether it is a simple act, such as posting on social media or attending an open house dressed in traditional garments, people across the nation share in the joy of the occasion. In 2006, when Deepavali and Hari Raya Aidilfitri fell on the same day, Malaysians were overjoyed. It was a rare coincidence and we made the most of the double celebration.

Today, as everything around us changes rapidly, festivals like Deepavali remind us to return to our roots and embrace tradition. Celebrating the triumph of light over darkness, Deepavali is all about joy, colour and the warmth of togetherness. We may be in a different time and things may not be exactly as they used to be, but the spirit of Deepavali remains the same.

For model Sharwita Krishnan, Deepavali has always meant family, tradition and the joy of togetherness. Everything felt so colourful, with new clothes, a bright home and relatives and friends filling the space with joy. Working in fashion, Deepavali also became a reminder of identity and the importance of staying true to oneself while expressing oneself in new ways.



Sharwita ... "Deepavali reminds me that beyond the race to the top, what truly matters is compassion and giving."

"Fashion gave me the space to celebrate my culture proudly. I've always been someone who embraces tradition, whether it is my own or from other communities. I find great happiness in experiencing and learning about the diverse cultures and traditions that Malaysia has to offer. I grew up exchanging traditional foods with my neighbours during festive seasons. These childhood experiences inspired me to always learn from and respect every culture," said Sharwita.

Sharing is caring. It also helps build greater knowledge and understanding about Deepavali. Sharwita has a platform that is not just about fashion and lifestyle, but about sharing values and stories that connect people. On her social media, she consistently highlights the spirit of light, unity and togetherness, whether through cultural traditions, traditional attire, types of Indian food or simply messages of positivity. It is her way of including everyone in celebrating this beautiful festival.

"Every year, I celebrate Deepavali with people from different backgrounds. Last year, I organised a potluck with friends from all over the world who currently live here. Everyone brought their own traditional food. I suddenly realised that many of our dishes are quite similar. Only the use of spices and cooking methods makes them distinctive," she said.

Through these experiences, she has gained a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity. She has become more open to blending different elements from various cultures into her fashion, food and daily life, while still holding on to the uniqueness of her own heritage.

"Deepavali reminds me that beyond the race to the top, what truly matters is compassion and giving. The joy of sharing light, food and time with others brings me back to my roots and keeps me grounded. It's a beautiful reminder that success feels more meaningful when it's shared with the people around us," she said, reflecting on the lessons she has learnt over the years.

Come together

Raginee Shalesh, along with the trainees and staff at IMC Training Centre for Special Needs, embodies the spirit of Deepavali through community outreach, organising food drives and distributing gifts to those less fortunate. The aim is to extend the festival's joy beyond her immediate circle and nurture compassion into the broader community.

"Deepavali provides a wonderful opportunity to strengthen bonds among family, friends and those in need. It is a time for prayer, feasting and celebration, infused with love, respect, and joy. This occasion not only fosters a sense of community but also encourages the practice of unique traditions that help dispel negativity and promote positive change," said Raginee.

The diverse cultural background of children and adults with special needs at IMC Training Centre enriches the celebration. Together, they prepare traditional sweets, create vibrant rangoli designs and share Indian cuisine. Under Shalesh's guidance, this collective experience deepens their appreciation for the festival's universal themes of hope and renewal, fostering connections that transcend cultural boundaries.

"At home with my family, the ritual of lighting diyas symbolises the triumph of light over darkness, uniting us in our shared values and reminding us to brighten the lives of others," she said.

In a world often focused on individual success, Deepavali serves as a vital reminder of the importance of compassion, generosity and social responsibility. It inspires us to reflect on our roles within the community and to uplift those in need. Shalesh reminds us that there are people who may not have the same opportunities for joy and we should keep them in our hearts during this special time.



Every year, Yashvin invites friends of different races, religions and backgrounds over for Deepavali dinner.



Kirstie ... "Deepavali celebrates unity, cultural traditions, beautiful clothing and, of course, amazing food."

The source of inspiration

Yashvin Kumar is an aspiring writer, spoken-word poet and educator. While he admits he is not the most spiritual person, Deepavali still holds significance for him.

"Every year, my mother cooks authentic vegetarian Kerala cuisine on two occasions – *Vishu and Onam*. For Deepavali, we prepare a variety of dishes – Malayali, Indian and other regional dishes – to feed ourselves, our friends and our family. Food heavily inspires my creative work, I think, because, like they say, you are what you eat. I eat well, so I'd like to believe I write well," Yashvin shared.

Yashvin may not have written directly about Deepavali, but he certainly includes the festival's values in his work: hope, thriving, and the triumph of light over darkness. To him, these concepts are universal and can resonate with others even without cultural references.

"I've always been happy to have friends of different races, religions and backgrounds over for Deepavali dinner. My family includes many interracial marriages, so we are already very diverse. I believe this has always influenced my work and my perspective on people. We are all human and can usually connect at a basic level through love, kindness and compassion," he said.

He believes mainstream success and hustle culture are overrated. Yashvin prefers to write about love, connection and kindness. Having celebrated Deepavali every year, he recognises how these themes recur in his writing. For him, his work is a reflection of his personal growth and values.

Into the beat

Deepavali means many different things to Kirstie Maximus Sebastian. For the deejay-turned-singer, it is about celebrating unity, cultural traditions, beautiful clothing and, of course, fantastic food. Maximus always feels honoured to receive invitations from her friends to join in their Deepavali celebrations. This inclusivity makes her feel welcomed and appreciated.

"Every year during Deepavali, the photos and videos my friends, family and I take are forever cherished. They always remind me of the laughter and happiness shared during each celebration," Kirstie said.

She also spreads the spirit of Deepavali through music. During the festive season, she enjoys incorporating Indian mixes into her sets, adding richness and energy to the atmosphere. Each set is curated on the spot, as she freestyles to uplift the crowd, especially during meaningful occasions like Deepavali.

"Music has no boundaries, so blending genres and sounds is a beautiful thing. It should be celebrated more often. As for Deepavali, the simple fact that everyone is welcomed to share food, joy and laughter makes me feel the love. I always think about the women who run the household, working tirelessly to provide a warm and open space for their guests. I sincerely hope this tradition never ends because, after all, love is all we have," she said.

In Malaysia, Deepavali is more than just a celebration of light. It reflects our shared values of unity, kindness and cultural appreciation. Whether through food, fashion, music or community, the spirit of Deepavali lives on in the ways we connect and celebrate together.



Raginee wants to extend the festival's joy beyond her immediate circle and nurture compassion in the broader community.



The taste that tells a story

One baker's mission to share Malaysia's spirit through his creations

BY **ASHRAF WAHAB**

WALK into any Malaysian home during the festive season and you're almost guaranteed to find a container of pineapple tarts on the table. But while most of us see these bite-sized treats as just another festive staple, for David Wong – the man behind the award-winning bakery Swee Bee - pineapple tarts are a story of heritage, love and Malaysia's unique cultural identity.

His bakery made headlines for bagging the gold award at the Malaysia Culinary World Cup 2023. On top of that, Swee Bee earned a place in the *Malaysian Book of Records* for creating the country's first square pineapple tart. But beyond the accolades, Wong is on a mission to show the world that this humble snack can be so much more than a seasonal indulgence.

The history of pineapple tarts dates back to the 16th century, during the era of the spice trade, when Peranakan communities in Malacca first experimented with the fruit. Since then, it has evolved into one of Malaysia's most beloved festive snacks. Whether it's Chinese New Year, Hari Raya or Deepavali, chances are the little golden tarts will make an appearance.

Wong grew up with the same tradition.

"My earliest memory is helping my mother bake pineapple tarts when I was about nine or ten," he said.

"She taught me to work with precision, pay attention to detail and bake with heart. Those lessons shaped my character."

But while the tart has strong roots in festive celebrations, Wong believes its meaning should extend far beyond the holiday season. At Swee Bee, customers purchase them for birthdays, weddings, baby full moon celebrations (a traditional Chinese custom to mark a baby's completion of the first month of life) and even corporate product launches. In line with the Malaysian spirit, his products also have halal certification.

"Blessings shouldn't be limited to festive seasons," Wong said with a smile.

"They can be shared all year round."

Reinventing tradition

The pineapple tart is iconic, yet highly localised. Different families and regions have their own take, from buttery *Nyonya*-style rolls to open-faced versions topped with a criss-cross pastry lattice. For Wong, it was important to stay true to tradition while adding his own touch.

That touch came in the form of Malaysia's first square pineapple tart, embossed with the Chinese character "福" (fortune). The design wasn't random. The square symbolises the four corners of the world – north, south, east and west where Chinese communities have settled, while the circle in the middle represents reunion. Together with the "福", the tart tells a story of blessings shared with family.

The inspiration, however, was more personal.

"My grandmother used to tease me about having a big mouth," Wong said, laughing.

"In Chinese, there's a saying, '口大吃四方', which means a big mouth can eat in all four directions. That symbol of prosperity and success inspired the square tart."

The innovation was a hit and eventually landed Swee Bee in the *Malaysian Book of Records*. But for Wong, it's not just about shape – it's about using food as a form of storytelling.

The secret behind the taste

So what makes Swee Bee's tarts stand out among the countless others on the market? Wong insists it's all about balance and heart.

The pastry is buttery and crumbly, melting in your mouth just as the tangy sweetness of the pineapple takes hold. Each batch utilises premium butter and carefully prepared pineapple paste, adjusted for the perfect sweet-sour harmony. The process is tedious and time-consuming, but Wong wouldn't have it any other way.



Wong with his mother, the inspiration behind Swee Bee.



Each box is adorned with batik and songket motifs, turning every gift into a tasteful piece of Malaysian heritage.

"Every tart must be consistent, precise and filled with care. Beyond ingredients, it's about baking with heart. That's what makes the difference," he said.

And customers agree. Wong recalled one story of a woman who brought his tarts overseas as a gift for a friend. The moment the friend tasted it, she burst into tears. The flavour instantly reminded her of her grandmother's baking.

"Moments like these remind me why I do what I do. Our tarts carry nostalgia, heritage and emotion," Wong said softly.

In a market crowded with mass-produced treats, branding has been key to Swee Bee's success. The bakery's packaging incorporates traditional *batik* and *songket* motifs, making each box a cultural keepsake. For personal or corporate gifting, the result is more than just a snack – it's a piece of Malaysia wrapped in elegance.

"Every box tells a story. We don't just sell tarts; we sell meaning. When you gift a Swee Bee pineapple tart, you're sharing a little piece of heritage and blessing," Wong shared.

Building a brand through challenges

Like many entrepreneurs, Wong's journey hasn't been smooth sailing. Starting in the food and beverage industry with a bakery and café, he eventually pivoted to focus solely on pineapple tarts during the pandemic. It was a bold move, but one that paid off. Swee Bee now operates in the heart of Klang and delivers nationwide.

> **Beyond ingredients, it's about baking with heart. That's what makes the difference."**

The biggest hurdles? Building brand trust, educating Malaysians that pineapple tarts aren't only for festive seasons and handling logistics for such fragile products. But with persistence, Wong slowly changed perceptions, positioning pineapple tarts as versatile gifts suitable for all occasions.

He credited storytelling and quality for helping Swee Bee stand out.

"The food business is tough. Competition is fierce and margins are thin. But if your product carries meaning, people will connect with it."

Winning gold at the Malaysia Culinary World Cup in 2023 was a turning point. Wong's entry – a 3D cake called *Ethnic Malaysia* – celebrated the country's multicultural heritage. It featured elements from Malay, Indian, Peranakan, Chinese and Iban traditions, with the pineapple tart as the unifying thread.

Judges from Sweden, Singapore, Vietnam and Taiwan were impressed by both the creativity and the flavour. For Wong, the award was not just a personal milestone but validation that pineapple tarts could stand proudly on the world stage.

"Recognition builds trust and prestige. It makes people confident to choose us, whether for personal celebrations or corporate partnerships. Awards open doors – but at the heart of it, the product must still deliver," he said.

Beyond the tart

Although pineapple tarts remain Swee Bee's signature, Wong has expanded into complementary products, including cookies, cakes, jams and even coffee, making them ideal for hampers and festive gifting. Special editions of the tarts now cater to specific life milestones, with designs like "囍" (double happiness) for weddings or "寿" (longevity) for birthdays.

And innovation continues. This Mid-Autumn Festival, Swee Bee launched a Dragon Ball mooncake – playful bite-sized mooncakes inspired by the legend of the dragon chasing the pearl. It's another way Wong is blending tradition with creativity.

A taste of home, a symbol of unity

At the end of the day, Wong's vision is simple – for Malaysian pastries, starting with pineapple tarts, to be recognised worldwide. He sees them as cultural ambassadors that tell our story through flavour and symbolism.

"I want people to feel warmth like coming home when they bite into a Swee Bee tarts," he expressed.

"More than taste, it's about evoking nostalgia, joy and connection. To know Malaysia is to know our pineapple tarts."

For Malaysians at home or abroad, that golden little bite is more than just a snack. It's a heritage you can hold in your hand and one that's now carrying Malaysia's story to the world.

> **For Malaysians at home or abroad, every bite of a pineapple tart carries warmth, memory and connection."**



Wong's creative twist is inspired by tradition, blending nostalgia with innovation.

Rhythm of roots

Klang-born artiste creates music that transcends cultures, weaving Tamil into Malay rap

BY **AQILAH NAJWA JAMALUDDIN**



Balan, Malaysian singer, rapper and songwriter.

MUSIC today feels boundless. A chorus in English can slip effortlessly into a verse, while Korean and Spanish have surged in global popularity. Amid this fluid exchange of tongues, Tamil stands apart, neither chasing trends nor radiating a fleeting beauty.

Its syllables, shaped by poets of the Sangam era and polished over centuries, now glide over electronic beats and cinematic strings, breathing ancient stories into modern soundscapes.

In films, on the radio or rising from a skilled singer's voice on stage, each word moves like silk through the air, shimmering with history and emotion. Tamil is not merely a language for lyrics. It is an instrument in itself.

As one of the world's oldest living languages, Tamil carries the resonance of more than 2,000 years of poetry, theatre and devotional song. Its vocabulary is steeped in metaphor and imagery drawn from nature, making it a natural home for both the romantic and the divine.

"Tamil is the oldest language in the world and more than one billion people speak it. Look at the market share. However, I am also fortunate to be born Malaysian, as I have Tamil, Malay, and English as my foundation languages. Not many people in other countries can say that," explained Balan Kash, Malaysian singer, rapper and songwriter.

The Klang-born artiste is known for creating music that transcends cultural boundaries. A firm advocate of cross-cultural unity, he wears his Malaysian heritage with pride, embracing every influence that has shaped his sound.

Famous for songs such as *Happy Gaji*, *Vaa Macha Vaa* and *Macha Magic Freestyle*, Balan said inspiration often comes from the smallest details of daily life.

"The song *Syurgaku* featuring Faizal Tahir was written when I was trying to put my daughter to sleep during Covid-19. *Kuala Lumpur* came to me while I was driving my wife around to see KLCC and then we simply headed home."

For Balan, being a creative Malaysian means constantly evolving to meet global standards while remaining deeply rooted in his identity.

"You have to keep up with the world, but never forget who you are along the way," he said.

Since 2010, Balan has collaborated with both homegrown and international acts, including Anirudh Ravichander, Mervin, Vivek, Joe Flizzow, Sasi The Don, DJ Fuzz, Reshmonu and Santesh, blending his talent for rapping in Tamil with an ability to serenade listeners in the poetic cadences of Malay.

Although passionate about championing his mother tongue for stronger representation, his journey has been anything but smooth.

In a music scene dominated by global genres like English and Korean pop, local languages such as Tamil, Malay and Chinese often struggle to gain the same level of visibility.

"When I first began blending Tamil and English in my music, people would say it felt too alien or that it was too 'Tamil' to be played in clubs or on the radio. Yet today, from Hollywood to independent hip hop, the world embraces such styles. Have we overcome it? K-pop may be commercially dominant, but we are still fighting to be heard," he said.

When asked whether standing at the forefront as a voice for the Indian-Malaysian community and bringing the Tamil language to broader audiences was a weight he could bear, Balan admits the pressure was palpable in the early days. Over time, however, he learned to adapt.

He knows the path he has chosen carries great responsibility. Yet because it is something he has always dreamt of, he embraces it as both a curse and a gift.

"It's a double-edged sword. I've wanted to be in the music business since I was young. I never knew it would be this tough and I never knew I had this much perseverance in me. I suppose my journey has shaped me as an artiste and defined my identity too," he reflected.

Phonetically, Tamil is rich in open vowels and soft plosives, providing singers with a palette of tones that can glide or strike with precision. There is a reason why certain ragas or love songs seem more luminous in Tamil - the syllables elongate like notes on a violin, allowing emotion to linger.

It often begins with a single syllable, warm and rounded, carrying centuries in its cadence. Before you realise it, Tamil has drawn you into a journey of storytelling and dialogue, leaving an impression that lingers for decades.

Even before the melody takes shape, the Tamil language hums with its own music. A rolling tide of vowels and consonants, it feels as though it was made for song.



Balan & Illegal Choy released a joint album titled "Illegally Macha".



Family first ... The driving force behind his music and motivation to keep dreaming big.

Even in fast-paced *kuthu* numbers, there is a percussive quality in the consonants that drives the beat forward.

By preserving Tamil through song, musicians are also preserving history. Each track becomes an archive of idioms, proverbs and expressions that might otherwise fade from daily speech. As urbanisation and globalisation accelerate, music offers a gentle resistance, reminding listeners that heritage is not a relic. It is living, breathing, capable of adapting without losing its soul.

For Balan, it has never been only about the Tamil language. It is about being proudly Malaysian, living in a tapestry of cultures and languages, lifting one another and placing the nation at the forefront of the global music scene.

"I want people to know that I carry my flag with my music wherever it goes. The Malaysian spirit must always be present. Rap culture may not have originated here, but poetry and rhythm live in every heartbeat. When I create music today, I write with my heart on my sleeve and pray it reaches someone who needs healing," he expressed, citing Malaysian legends such as P Ramlee and Dato Sri Siti Nurhaliza as his idols.

"Malaysia has some of the best musicians in the world. The body of work and the growth we have seen in the last 60 years are extraordinary. From P Ramlee to David Arumugam to M Nasir, I could name countless more.

"One of my dream collaborations would be with Jaclyn Victor. Her voice deserves to be heard around the world. And of course, M Nasir, Yogi B, Too Phat and Lock Up, because I grew up listening to them. It would be incredible to create music together and make something truly timeless," he said, hopeful.

Looking at the state of young and upcoming talents today, Balan advised that while it is good to dream big, staying true to Malaysian roots and letting culture speak through the music is what truly matters.

He urged young artistes to approach global influences with discernment, to celebrate creativity without losing themselves to the excesses often associated with *budaya kuning*.

For him, cultural pride is not about rejecting what is foreign, but about grounding ambition in identity, ensuring that success abroad still reflects the heart of home.

"I pray my music inspires them to dream big. If someone from Klang can start in the underground circuit and work their way up to build a career, a family and a legacy, then anything is possible. I don't always know what's real and what's not and the odds can be stacked against you, but believe in your dreams and stay grounded. Today, you have every tool you need. The world is yours," he shared.

In a world where fame moves at lightning speed, Balan stands as proof that true artistry is built on depth rather than spectacle. His music embodies both heritage and hope, serving as a reminder that the strongest voices are those rooted in something larger than themselves.

For Balan, representing Malaysia is not a branding exercise but a calling and every beat, every verse, every rhyme is his way of answering it.



Flying the Malaysian flag high, Balan continues to spotlight the beauty and strength of the Tamil language.

Lighting the way with language

EVERY Deepavali, homes across Malaysia come alive with colour, conversation and song. Beyond the glow of ghee lamps and the laughter of family gatherings, music holds a special place; it connects generations, bridging the sounds of the past with the pulse of today.

For many Malaysian Indians, Tamil songs form the soundtrack of the Deepavali Festival. From classic devotional hymns to contemporary tracks that blend ancient ragas with modern beats, the music reflects the duality of Deepavali itself: Reverence and renewal, tradition and transformation.

In recent years, a new wave of local artistes has carried this spirit forward, fusing Tamil verses with Malay, English and global influences. It's more than just creative experimentation. It's a celebration of identity, a reaffirmation that Tamil, one of the world's oldest living languages, continues to evolve and shine.

As families prepare for the festival – stringing kolam, donning new clothes and sharing sweets the songs that play in the background do more than entertain. They remind listeners of their heritage, of the resilience of language and culture that have endured through migration, modernity and change.

Deepavali, after all, is about light triumphing over darkness. In that sense, every melody that carries the Tamil language forward is a spark of its own, a small flame of pride, faith and continuity.



Your brain called – it's tired of multitasking

Notifications, group chats, sale alerts – our minds weren't built for this much noise. If your attention span is MIA, you're not alone. It's time to mute the chaos and find your way back

BY **SIMON VELLA**



IT used to be easier to finish things. A book. A conversation. Even a thought. Now, it's not uncommon to walk into a room and forget why you're there, open Facebook while waiting for something to load or scroll through five apps in the span of a single minute.

The mind is always slightly elsewhere – flipping between tabs, chats, half-read captions and whatever the algorithm throws at you next. Focus, once something we took for granted, has quietly become a luxury.

You might think it's just a phase or that you're getting older and "slower". But studies confirm what many already feel: our attention spans are shrinking. A 2022 Microsoft study revealed that the average person's ability to focus on a task has dropped from 12 seconds to just 8 – shorter than the attention span of a goldfish, as the now-famous line goes.

Other studies have gone further, linking poor focus to anxiety, mood swings and even lower self-esteem. But this isn't a doomscroll diagnosis. It's a real, solvable issue and the first step is noticing just how splintered our attention has become.

> **"You don't need an app to reclaim your mind, just a pause."**

We live in a world designed to interrupt you

Notifications. Pings. Sale alerts. Group chats. Breaking news. Every app on your phone is engineered to capture your attention. Even in moments of stillness, your hand might reach for your phone without conscious intent.

Malaysians aren't immune. In fact, our hyper-connected culture with its blurred lines between work and personal life makes it harder to log off. You might be replying to a work email, but at the same time, you're half-hearing a voice note, reading a WhatsApp thread about wedding plans and deciding what to take away for dinner.

Cognitive overload isn't a metaphor – it's the default setting.

Urban life only adds to the noise. In cities like KL and Johor Bahru, overstimulation is built into the landscape. Horns, MRT announcements, mall jingles – even your living room might double as a workspace, family room and late-night WhatsApp centre.

You're never truly clocked out. There's always one more message to answer. One more thing to scroll. One more mental tab open.

Multitasking isn't a badge of honour

We like to say we're good multitaskers – that we can cook, reply to emails and parent, all at once. But neuroscientists disagree. The brain doesn't "multitask"; it switches rapidly and each switch burns energy and reduces performance.

This mental ping-pong leads to exhaustion without depth. You feel busy, but rarely satisfied. Some experts refer to this as the "intention deficit" – the chronic habit of starting things but never fully committing to them.

In Malaysia, especially among the sandwich generation, multitasking is more a matter of survival than a strategy. People are juggling careers, elder care, tuition runs and team chats simultaneously. Add in our culture of *jaga hati* – avoiding conflict or saying no and it's no wonder focus is elusive.

Yet protecting your attention isn't about becoming antisocial. It's about recognising what's draining your mental battery and slowly reconfiguring your day to support clarity.

Small rituals, big resets

You don't fix scattered focus by trying harder. You fix it by making space.

One muted notification. One walk without headphones. One hour where your phone lives in a different room. If you can't take long breaks, create micro-moments: five minutes of silence before lunch, ten screen-free minutes after dinner.



Multitasking can leave us feeling tired without accomplishing anything significant.

These moments tell your brain: It's safe. You're allowed to slow down.

Some Malaysians already use cultural cues – such as lighting incense, playing soft religious recitations or even switching chairs to signal deep work. These aren't just rituals. They're anchors. They gently remind your brain to settle.

You can also reclaim your environment. Try a soft digital detox. Delete one app for a week. Use built-in timers. If weekends feel rushed, give yourself one quiet morning to unwind. No screens. Just breakfast and birdsong. Walking in nature can do more for your brain than another hour online.

Here's what no one tells you: Boredom is good for you.

When you're not constantly being fed content, your brain starts creating its own. Ideas surface. Dots connect. Reflection returns. Boredom isn't a flaw. It's the compost in which focus grows.

Attention is how we experience life

This isn't about becoming a productivity guru. It's about reclaiming something more basic – your ability to be present.

Focus doesn't mean blocking the world out. It means choosing one thing at a time and giving it your whole self, even if just for ten minutes. It means remembering that your brilliant brain isn't designed to process a thousand things at once.

In our Malaysian context, where expectations are layered from family, bosses and our own perfectionist streaks – protecting your focus might feel indulgent. But it isn't. It's a form of self-preservation. Because attention isn't just about output, it's how we connect. Notice beauty. Feel joy. Stay sane.

No matter how scattered you feel, your focus is still in there – under the noise, under the habit of switching, under the scroll.

One breath. One boundary. One quiet reset at a time.

> **"Focus isn't perfection. Its presence, even for ten minutes."**



Fragrance guide for Malaysians

BY **ASHRAF WAHAB**

Here are scents that suit our climate, lifestyles and moments

HAVE you ever noticed that a whiff of cologne can instantly bring back a memory from ten years ago or make you think of someone you haven't seen in ages? There's a simple explanation for that.

Science has shown that our sense of smell is closely linked to memory and emotion, more than any of our other senses. That's because the olfactory bulb, which processes scent, sits right next to the amygdala and hippocampus – the parts of our brain responsible for emotion and memory.

In a warm, humid country like Malaysia, choosing the right fragrance isn't just about smelling good. It's about finding one that works with our tropical climate, suits the occasion, and if you're lucky, becomes part of how people remember you.

Whether you're powering through meetings in KL, studying on a Penang campus or heading out for date night in Bangsar, here's a curated list of the best fragrances for Malaysians in 2025.

Office fragrance for men
If there's one fragrance that exudes professionalism without being overbearing, it's Bleu de Chanel. With its refined blend of citrus, incense and woody notes, it exudes a confident, polished vibe – perfect for high-stakes meetings and long days at the office.

Why it works for Malaysians: It has the freshness to cut through the heat but dries down to something warm and sophisticated. Whether you're in air-conditioned boardrooms or moving between appointments in the Klang Valley, this one stays crisp and long-lasting.



Alternative: Terre d'Hermès
A timeless office staple, Bleu de Chanel balances freshness and depth for Malaysia's humid days.

Office fragrance for women
Miss Dior Blooming Bouquet is the kind of scent that feels like a fresh start. Light, floral and subtly sweet, it makes you feel put together without being too loud – ideal for the workplace.

Why it works for Malaysians: The notes of peony, rose and white musk are soft and refreshing, a good balance for humid days. It's elegant yet never overpowering, making it ideal for shared workspaces or open-plan offices.

Alternative: Chanel Chance Eau Tendre
Miss Dior Blooming Bouquet brings a hint of floral grace to everyday wear.

Date or special occasion fragrance for men
Looking to make an impression? Yves Saint Laurent Y Le Parfum hits the sweet spot between edgy and sensual. It combines apple, sage and tonka bean with a smooth woody base. It's the fragrance equivalent of a crisp button-down and a cheeky grin.

Why it works for Malaysians: The projection and longevity are strong, so it holds up well during dinner dates in rooftop lounges or late-night strolls in Putrajaya. It's memorable in the best way.

Alternative: Giorgio Armani Acqua di Giò Profumo
Y Le Parfum strikes the perfect balance between charm and confidence.



Date or special occasion fragrance for women
There's a reason this fragrance has a cult following – it's mysterious, addictive and undeniably luxurious. With a unique blend of saffron, amberwood and jasmine, Maison Francis Kurkdjian Baccarat Rouge 540 is all about making a statement.

Why it works for Malaysians: This scent cuts through humid air and lingers on skin for hours. It's perfect for candlelit dinners or special events where you want to leave a lasting impression (and maybe a trail of admirers).

Alternative: Yves Saint Laurent Black Opium
The unforgettable allure of Baccarat Rouge 540 turns any evening into an occasion.

Men's fragrance for university or college students
Montblanc Explorer offers the adventurous spirit of high-end colognes like Creed Aventus, but at a more student-friendly price. Fresh, woody and just a little bit spicy, it's wearable for class, campus hangouts and weekend outings.

Why it works for Malaysians: It's affordable yet smells far more expensive than it is. Excellent sillage without being overwhelming, making it suitable for classroom settings and post-class coffee sessions.

Alternative: Versace Dylan Blue
Explorer captures youthful ambition with a sophisticated edge.

Women's fragrance for university or college students
Don't overlook Zara's fragrance game. Zara Gardenia offers an impressive depth with notes of coffee, vanilla and orange blossom. It's chic, a little playful and perfect for young women who want to experiment without breaking the bank.



Why it works for Malaysians: It's light enough for daily wear, yet has character. Plus, the price means you can reapply mid-day without guilt – even after a sweaty LRT ride or back-to-back lectures.

Alternative: Ariana Grande Cloud
Zara Gardenia brings a touch of affordable luxury to student life.

Weekend fragrance for men
You've clocked out and it's time to play. Dior Sauvage Elixir is bold, spicy and just a bit wild. With cinnamon, lavender and patchouli, this scent has "weekend warrior" written all over it.

Why it works for Malaysians: Its punchy nature makes it perfect for clubbing in KL or brunches in Mont Kiara. This isn't a background scent – it turns heads.

Alternative: Jean Paul Gaultier Le Male Le Parfum
A daring scent for weekends that call for energy and edge.

Weekend fragrance for women
For a relaxing weekend vibe, Jo Malone English Pear & Freesia Cologne is a breath of fresh air. It's fruity, floral and feels like a light breeze on a sunny afternoon. Jo Malone's signature minimalism shines here.

Why it works for Malaysians: In our hot, humid climate, heavy scents can feel too cloying. This one remains airy and elegant – perfect for a café date, errands or even a day trip to Sekinchan.

Alternative: Marc Jacobs Daisy
English Pear & Freesia – the scent of simplicity and sunshine.



Final spritz
Choosing the right fragrance is a bit like choosing your signature drink – it says something about you. With our tropical weather and fast-paced lifestyles, Malaysians need scents that perform, feel fresh and suit the moment.

Whether you're closing deals, starting semester one or simply enjoying your weekend, the right fragrance doesn't just make you smell good – it becomes part of how people remember you.

So go on, spritz wisely.

Joyful decluttering

BY **DAYANA SOBRI**



IT started with a mountain of clothes on my bed that had been there for over a week. Then two. Then, somehow, I was sleeping beside them instead of moving them. The more I ignored the mess, the heavier I felt. The room began to reflect my state of mind: Chaotic, unmotivated and increasingly dark.

I'd developed a shopping addiction during a particularly low point in my life, triggered by anxiety and long-unprocessed traumas. The short-term dopamine hit of new clothes and shiny parcels gave me a sense of control, but it didn't last. The items quickly joined the existing piles, tags still on, barely worn, along with clothes I hadn't asked for, which were gifted by my mother-in-law.

I had signed up for a complimentary 30-minute consultation call (available only to first-timers) through Spark Joy & Flow, a decluttering service offered by Rebecca Jo-Rushdy, a certified KonMari consultant trained by Marie Kondo. I didn't expect much, but I hoped that talking to someone who had guided others through clutter might finally get me to confront mine.

The decision to seek help

Decluttering always felt too overwhelming. I'd start, stop halfway, then beat myself up for not following through. But the longer I let it slide, the more helpless I felt in my own space. Studies from the University of California have shown that a cluttered home can significantly increase cortisol levels, the primary stress hormone. Another research piece in the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* noted that people with untidy dwellings were more likely to experience fatigue and depression.



A complimentary consultation with certified KonMari consultant Rebecca Jo-Rushdy (left) offered the first real push to face the clutter head-on.

> **"Decluttering isn't about discarding, it's about choosing what truly deserves space in your life."**

In Malaysia, mental health advocacy is gaining traction, but conversations around how our physical environment impacts our psychological state still feel lacking. It's not just "*malas nak kemas*" sometimes, we're paralysed by our own survival mode.

So when I saw that Spark Joy & Flow offered a free consultation call complete with free tools and resources, I booked it. No excuses.

What actually happens during the call

I expected a gentle chat. I got a gentle reality check. Rebecca saw me exactly how I was: curled up on a chair, apologising for the mess behind me on camera.

We started with a grounding exercise, which surprised me. She asked me to take a breath and feel my feet on the floor, something simple, but incredibly centring. Then, we began by identifying the real reason I booked the call.

"I need to feel better," I admitted. "I can't keep pretending this mess doesn't affect me."

Rebecca explained that clutter often masks deeper discomfort. It's not about laziness, but avoidance.

"We can't declutter from a place of shame. We need to start with compassion," she said.

Then came the practical part. Using one of her free worksheets, she helped me identify my "spark vision": How I actually wanted my space to feel. I scribbled down things like "clear surfaces", "soft light" and "a room that feels like rest, not guilt".

Next, she guided me to choose one starting point. Not the whole room. Just one area. We decided on my clothing pile.

"Your mother-in-law must love you very much, judging by how many clothes she bought for you without asking." As I panned my camera to show her the overflowing wardrobe and the mound of garments on my bed, she chuckled gently and said.

I told her how my generous mother-in-law would often surprise me with new clothes, which were oftentimes oversized, undersized or just downright not my style.

We both laughed because it was true. And hearing it framed with humour instead of judgment helped me let go of some of the guilt I had been carrying.

From mountains of fabric to clarity

Instead of asking me to get rid of things immediately, Rebecca encouraged me to start by sorting clothes into "like with like" categories, such as shirts with shirts, pants with pants and so on. Even doing that felt like a shift.

She asked thoughtful questions along the way:

"Do you feel energised or heavy when you look at this piece?"
"Is this something you would choose to wear today?"
"Who were you when you bought this?"

I hadn't realised how much guilt I was holding, not just from overspending, but from the weight of gifts I didn't love but felt obliged to keep. That remark about my mother-in-law lightened the mood and it also allowed me to see the clothes for what they were: Things, not obligations.

Throughout the session, she reminded me that decluttering doesn't mean throwing everything away. It means making conscious decisions about what to keep, what to thank and release and what to store more intentionally.

What changed after the call

I didn't transform overnight. But something had shifted. That evening, I cleared half my bed. The next day, I folded the remaining clothes. By the end of the week, I had three bags for donation and one for recycling. The sense of progress was subtle but steady.



Choose one starting point with no pressure to finish everything in one go.

Most importantly, I stopped shaming myself for the mess and started treating my space and myself with more kindness. I even gently asked my mother-in-law not to buy me any more clothes, since I already have too many (and I didn't want her to waste a lot of money).

In the weeks that followed, I used the free resources Rebecca shared to guide me through the following steps: Tackling my books, sentimental items and eventually, my digital clutter. The decluttering format provided me with a manageable container, allowing me to work for 60 minutes at a time, with no pressure to finish everything in one go.

"People don't just acquire things; they assign emotional significance to them," I remembered Rebecca's words as I went through my clutter.

It explained why I held on to that vintage designer bag from a thrift shop, even though it was falling apart. Or the shoes I hadn't worn since 2018. Letting go wasn't just about space; it was about letting go of stories that no longer served me.

Decluttering as a healing ritual

In Malaysia, where mental health services have become more accessible (especially within the Klang Valley), taking small personal actions, such as decluttering through a special programme or service, can offer a way to reclaim control. It's not a cure for depression, but it is a supportive practice.

In one of the talks on financial literacy by the Malaysia Financial Planning Council that I attended, they discussed how cluttered spaces can lead to financial clutter, including missed bills, duplicated purchases and unorganised statements.

"The state of your home can reflect the state of your finances and mind," the expert panellist said, whose name has tragically been 'decluttered' from my mind.

I began to see decluttering not as a chore, but as a healing ritual. A way to reintroduce structure into a life that often feels frayed at the edges.

Final reflections

What started as a free 30-minute call led to deeper, longer conversations with myself. I still shop occasionally, but now I pause. I ask if the item supports my "spark vision". I ask if I'm buying from joy or from panic. And most days, I now walk into my room and feel a sense of peace.

There's still work to do. Healing takes time. But I now know that clutter is not the enemy; avoidance is. The moment I permitted myself to start, imperfectly and awkwardly, I had already begun.

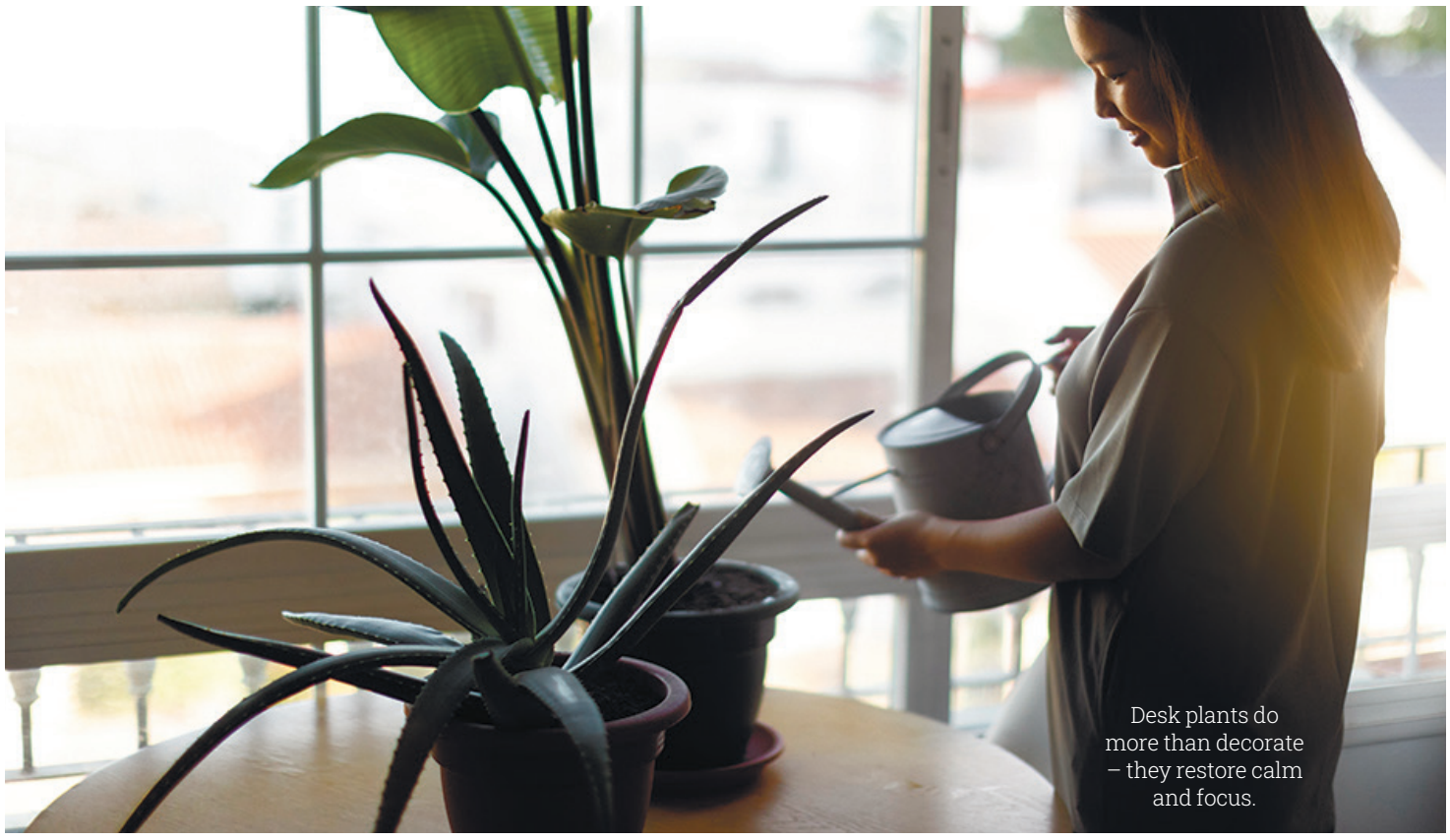
Rebecca's complimentary session reminded me of something powerful: clarity doesn't come after the clean-up. It comes the moment you decide you're worthy of a space that reflects who you are becoming.

Even if you start with just one pile.

Oh and I can finally sleep on the bed comfortably.



Only remaining clothes ... The sense of progress was subtle but steady.



Desk plants do more than decorate – they restore calm and focus.

A forest in your shower, peace on your shelf

BY **CECELIA FONG**

IT starts with one plant. A pothos by the window, maybe a basil pot on the kitchen sill. Then one day you realise – the shelf now holds a trailing fern, there's a rubber plant near your desk and your shower suddenly hosts a hardy spider plant clinging to a ceramic ledge. You haven't moved to the forest, but somehow, the forest has crept a little closer to you.

Bringing greenery into our living and working spaces has long been seen as decorative. However, science and experience suggest that something deeper is happening. Whether it's a single peace lily or a shelf full of succulents, the act of coexisting with plants changes us. We slow down. We pay attention. In a world of digital noise and plastic surfaces, we reconnect with something elemental.

In Malaysia, this shift is subtle but visible. It's a result of the rising popularity of houseplants among young urban dwellers. It's in the sprouting of community gardening spaces in previously barren neighbourhood corners. It's even in the offices that now hang staghorn ferns or build green walls into their reception areas. These changes are more than aesthetic – they're emotional, even spiritual. Because greenery doesn't just fill a space, it restores it.

Roots that steady the mind

Plants provide visual calm, but their benefits go well beyond what meets the eye. Numerous studies have linked indoor plants to lower stress levels, reduced blood pressure and improved air quality. But their most consistent effect is on mood. Being near greenery – even potted greenery – triggers a biological relaxation response. It invites the nervous system to downshift, creating a subtle sense of ease in the body and mind.

In a high-rise apartment or an open-plan office, a single plant can significantly alter the emotional atmosphere of a room. Its presence introduces life, softness and rhythm. Unlike a phone or a screen, a plant never demands your attention but rewards it when you offer it. You begin to notice leaf colour, the direction of new growth, even how a plant leans toward sunlight across the day. This quiet observation fosters something increasingly rare: Presence.

For many, caring for plants has become a form of grounding practice – a mini-ritual of watering, wiping leaves and checking for pests. It may not be a formal meditation, but it offers the same effects: Focus, repetition and stillness. Psychologists describe this as "tending-and-befriending", an evolutionary caregiving instinct that, when activated, lowers anxiety and builds emotional resilience.

This may explain why plant ownership surged during the pandemic. In the face of uncertainty, people turned to small green responsibilities. In doing so, many discovered a surprisingly deep sense of comfort not just from the plants themselves, but from the act of caring for them.

The ecosystem indoors

Contrary to what social media might suggest, plant ownership doesn't require a botanical degree or a perfect minimalist shelf. Many common indoor species, such as snake plants, pothos, peace lilies and rubber plants, are famously forgiving. Others, such as mint or lemongrass, offer culinary benefits while also brightening your home.

What's emerging in urban Malaysia is a more personal, intuitive form of planting. Some people cultivate edible herbs on balconies. Others fill their bathrooms with humidity-loving ferns. There are even apartment dwellers who grow miniature versions of rainforest understorey plants in terrariums – tiny green worlds sealed in glass.

Plants also help define space. A living room partitioned with bamboo or fiddle leaf figs feels less boxy and more organic. A reading corner framed by a monstera or philodendron feels intentional and serene. As more people work from home, having greenery near their desk has proven to support focus and productivity, especially under artificial lighting and extended screen exposure.

These benefits also extend to shared spaces. Malaysian cafés now compete not just on coffee, but on leafy aesthetics. Co-working hubs offer "plant corners" or balcony gardens. Hospitals and public clinics are increasingly incorporating courtyard greenery, recognising its role in promoting healing.

Where once air fresheners and plastic flowers dominated, we now see frangipani leaves curling gently near windows, spider plants on reception counters or betel leaf vines trailing down stairwells. These are not grand design statements – but small acts of reconnection.

Living with the wild indoors

Beyond health or décor, living with plants changes our relationship with nature. It reminds us that we are not separate from the ecosystem, but part of it, even if our ecosystem includes a tenth-floor condo. The natural world isn't only something you drive to on weekends. It can exist in a corner of your flat, on your office ledge, or hanging from your shower caddy.

This mindset matters. Studies in environmental psychology indicate that individuals who maintain plants indoors are more likely to prioritise sustainability, biodiversity and climate concerns. The more you tend to life, even in a pot – the more connected you feel to living systems beyond yourself.

Children raised with plants in their homes also show greater sensitivity to the natural world. They're more likely to ask questions about where food comes from, how pollination works or why some leaves wilt and others don't. These moments become gentle introductions to deeper awareness, gateways to future environmental stewardship.

Of course, not every plant survives. Leaves turn yellow, roots rot and infestations occur. However, this too is part of the learning process. Living with plants teaches tolerance for imperfection, patience with process and the value of persistence. It teaches that not all growth is visible immediately and not all failure is permanent.

In Malaysia's increasingly vertical cities, where gardens are a luxury and trees are often surrounded by pavement, the return of plants indoors feels both symbolic and practical. It's not just about greening your home. It's about remembering you're still part of something green – something alive, slow and beautifully unfinished.



Miniature indoor ecosystems offer beauty, calm and a microdose of the wild.

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Power & style

New BMW R12 nineT looks better yet retains iconic character



BY WAHID OOI

RIDING the 2025 BMW R12 nineT was interesting – to say the very least – on several levels. It was not only due to mechanical factors but external ones as well and many questions from readers.

What is the 2025 BMW R 12 nineT?

It began in 2014, when BMW Motorrad introduced the R nineT to commemorate the 90th anniversary of BMW motorcycles.

Designed by both Motorrad together with custom bike legend, Roland Sands, the R nineT was decidedly modern classic in design, drawing a connection to the BMW "R" Boxer lineage.

First to be produced was the R nineT, followed by several variants based on the same platform: Urban GS, Racer, Scrambler, and Pure.

So, 10 years later, BMW introduced the new R12 platform as a continuation of the R nineT's legacy. Following its ancestor, the nineT variant was the first to be introduced.

The R12 nineT is a roadster/standard/naked bike, built around the same 1170cc Boxer engine, but brings forth several new features.

The engine is as far as it goes in terms of similarities with its predecessor.

Highlights and features

- 1170cc, air/oil-cooled, horizontally-opposed-twin (Boxer), which produces a maximum power of 109hp at 7,000RPM and a peak torque of 115Nm at 6,500RPM.
- Newly designed exhaust system with twin chrome mufflers.
- Engine power transmitted through single disc dry clutch, then through six-speed gearbox.
- Marzocchi 45mm upside-down forks up front, adjustable for spring preload, compression damping, and rebound damping.
- Monoshock with a progressive spring at the back, adjustable for spring preload and rebound damping.



The preload for the front forks can be adjusted.



Seat is low and comfortable.



The analogue meters are jewel like in their finishing.

- As with all BMW Boxer-engined models, R12 nineT utilises single-sided Paralever swingarm, but now stouter.
- Twin 310mm front brake discs, gripped by twin four-piston calipers.
- Single 265mm brake disc at the back.
- Brakes are supported by BMW Motorrad Integral ABS Pro.
- New tubular steel frame.
- Aluminium fuel tank.
- 795mm seat height.
- Three riding modes namely Rain, Road and Dynamic.
- Electronic rider aids include Dynamic Engine Brake Control, Dynamic Traction Control, Hill Hold Control.

Pre-Ride

Checking out the bike for the first time, it looked similar but different. BMW did a great job of retaining the previous R nineT's look while packing the new model with so many updates.

Upon closer inspection, we noticed that the snail proboscis-like intake trumpet has been deleted.

The seat was also visibly lower, with the rear portion of the bike sitting lower over the rear wheel, giving the bike a slightly stretched out and low-slung look.

Speaking of the wheels, our test bike's wheels were cast aluminium, different from the wire-spoked wheels in BMW's official pictures. The rear wheel drew lots of attention, as it looked like a *shuriken*.

The fuel tank was partly painted, while leaving the sides in polished aluminium. Yes, the previous R nineT had this, but it somehow looked better on the new bike.

The new R12 nineT is a handsome bike when viewed from



The shaft drive provides for a smooth ride.



Braking power is phenomenal

any angle. Pictures really do not do it any justice.

The twin clocks are beautiful, which had inset LCD screens. These screens may be small, but the characters displayed are big enough to be easily readable.

Flipping through the data display, set up was achieved through the handlebar mounted switchgear and BMW Multi-Controller ring.

First ride

Firing up the Boxer had it punching to one side. Blipping the throttle also results in such sensation. Now, this is how a Boxer engine is supposed to be, which reminded us that it was alive. Such sensation has since been missing with the introduction of the "Water Head" (liquid-cooled) Boxer.

The new exhaust system sounded slightly softer than its predecessor's, as a silencer box with catalytic converter sits below the transmission, which negated the old decibel-controlling valve. Still, there was enough of the signature Boxer roar coming through.

Climbing on surprised us immediately. While we tip-toed on the old bike, both feet found the ground easily now.

Reach to the handlebar was slightly far for this writer with short arms and legs but still natural. The handlebar was wide, which stretched out reach further when turning at low speeds.

With Road mode selected, we engaged first gear and it clacked into place without mistake, including aurally.

We released the soft pull clutch lever and away we went, surfing on a wave of Boxer torque.

Fun time

It was immediately clear that the subject about horsepower versus torque will crop up when discussion this bike. While most people view horsepower figures like the holy grail, the real mover is engine torque.

Torque is what gets the motorcycle (or any vehicle) moving, accelerates it and build revs to reach maximum horsepower.

And this is exactly where you have to give BMW credit for sticking to the Boxer. The bike just pulled and pulled through any gear, while serenading you with that distinctive Boxer drawl.

We know, some may say that this "Oilhead" engine is "low-tech" compared to the 1300cc, liquid-cooled, and ShiftCam-equipped Boxer of the R-series, but all that got blown away every time we opened the throttle. This engine has character.

Soon, we found ourselves "cruising" down MEX Highway at 140kph (and above) on cruise control, while the engine just happily droned on between our legs.

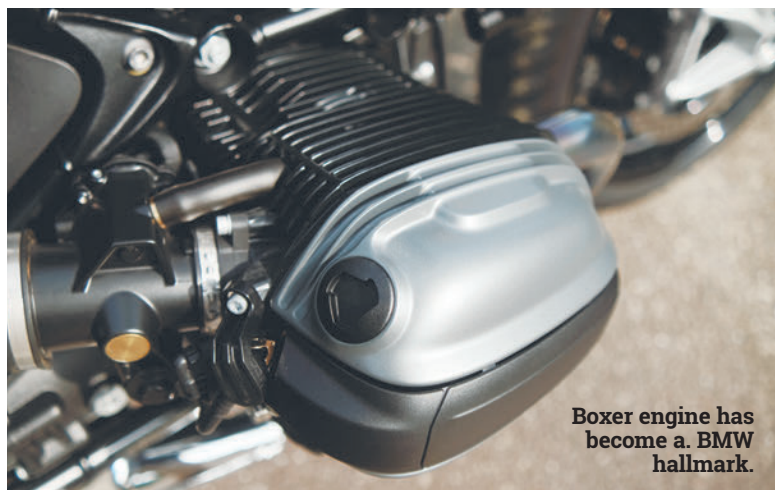
Doing the twist

We generally take it very easy in corners with bikes that are low and long. Usually, such motorcycles do not like to attack corners and instead prefer to be steered smoothly into long and wide curves.

However, steering the R12 nineT into the sharp right and left corners on the off-ramp to Bukit Jalil had the chassis telling us that we were too slow, as the bike steered eagerly into the inside of those corners.

So, instead of turning into Seri Petaling, we decided to test out the two corners that led to the Sungai Besi Toll Plaza.

Steering into the first turn, a long left, had the suspension sink into its initial compression travel, letting the tyres bite hard into the road.


Boxer engine has become a. BMW hallmark.

With the confidence gained, we chucked the bike into the decreasing radius right under the tunnel with the throttle off through the apex, before gunning it hard on the exit.

We kid you not, the R12 nineT blasted that corner as good as any modern naked sport bike.

This came to us as a complete surprise as the bike had no business in handling this good, given its low seat height and long wheelbase!

Yes, the Boxer engine played a huge role in its agility. BMW detractors deride the cylinders hanging out the sides, but it is because of this that lowers the engine's centre of gravity.

This lower centre of gravity also provides a lot of stability, especially when riding at lower speeds. This is why BMW GS owners do not complain about the tall seat when negotiating traffic.

Anyway, we decided to do more corner testing, and the best places were the Suke Highway from Bukit Jalil to Genting Klang, before turning into the SPE, and onwards to Kesas Highway and up "The Mountain."

Suke Highway is the perfect route to test how a bike's chassis handles bumpy corners. Whereas other bikes hopped over bumps, the R12 nineT was super smooth. This, without BMW's Dynamic ESA electronic suspension.

The SPE, on the other hand, has several tight and narrow corners, which the bike dispatched without threatening to run wide.

The Karak Highway is of course for holding speed through flowing corners, and we switched to Dynamic ride mode, which is akin to Sport. Now, the engine felt truly alive, letting us feel every bit of its power stroke and aggression.

It was now that the bike felt a lot more like a power cruiser as it swept through corners while we regulated the throttle, using the engine's torque for braking and acceleration.

Of course we did not bother to chase the 1000cc super bikes, but riders on lighter and more powerful naked bikes were shown the benefits of smooth riding.

Up the mountain, we had so much fun – fully utilising the bike's superb brakes, quick steering, and Boxer torque, as we roared from one corner to the next.

We hardly ever rowed through the gearbox all the way up, keeping the bike in fourth through most corners, while selecting second and third only very occasionally.

The only thing that discouraged us from being more aggressive was the fear of grounding the cylinder heads. In fact, the first accessory we would install if we owned this bike, are cylinder head sliders.

Speaking of the transmission, it was the only downside of the 2025 BMW R12 nineT.

Releasing the clutch too hastily or using the Shift Assist (quickshifter) at slightly lower revs had the gears clunking during engagement and could be heard all around.

As aggressive as we were, we also want to portray any test bike in good light, so we learned to let the clutch lever out more progressively and use the quickshifter only above midrange RPM.

Closing

Honestly, we felt sad to return the bike as we had not felt this way over test bikes for a long time. In fact, to be brutally honest, we sometimes feel jaded after testing so many bikes.

But almost every bike we have tested in the last five years or so have been excellent in almost every aspect. But what made us love the BMW R12 nineT is its character.

And let us not forget the number of stares and enquiries we received when we had the bike.

The 2025 BMW R12 nineT is priced from RM124,500.

Specifications

Engine: Air/oil-cooled, two-cylinder, boxer
Power: 95hp @ 6500rpm
Torque: 110Nm @ 6000rpm
Transmission: 6-speed, constant mesh
Price (as tested): RM124,500

Lemon law & Langkawi



WRITTEN BY KESHY DHILLON

THE 2026 budget announcement has been interesting for car buyers. Among many other things, one of the highlights that had everyone rejoicing was the mention of the highly anticipated lemon law.

Though not finalised and still under study, prime minister and finance minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has said that the government will amend the Consumer Protection Act 1999 and this will include elements of the lemon law to protect car buyers.

This is great news as a law protecting car buyers has been largely absent in the country. If you don't already know, a lemon refers to a problematic new or used vehicle.

For too long buyers were forced to file a case with tribunal courts where lengthy drawn-out processes push victims to financial and mental extremes, often with no clear or favourable outcomes.

This has allowed some unscrupulous car makers to benefit from this loophole and sell subpar cars.

While it is perfectly understandable for some mass-produced cars to have problems, car makers should also take responsibility when their customers face repeated problems as well.

There have been too many cases of buyers being given the run around to fix their cars.

But while all this is well and good for consumers, we should also keep in mind that this announcement does not mean the end of problematic cars.

In fact, the onus will be on the consumer to prove that their car is problematic, and this can be another long process in court. And a long process usually involves a lot of money, time and effort.

The other announcement that caught my attention was about the end of duty-free cars in Langkawi. While this is only meant for cars above RM300,000, I think that it is time that the exemption ends as well.

But perhaps the government could have done it in a different way.

Rather than outright ending the exemption, perhaps they could have considered not allowing duty free cars costing upwards of RM300,000 to Langkawi Island at all.

Right now, cars bought in Langkawi are allowed to be on the mainland for three months after every six months.

Rich folks have used this to buy four to five supercars and rotate them every few months.

Anyway, by only allowing the rich to enjoy their cars on the island, it would mean they would need to spend time on the island.

With more people with money flocking to the island, this would have been good for the economy and maybe even spurred job growth.

Perhaps this would have led to some entrepreneur to build a racetrack on the island, and this would have attracted more high nett-worth tourists to the island. Something like Monaco.

Everyone knows Langkawi needs a lifeline and if you ask me, this is a missed opportunity. But it is not too late to reverse the decision.

There are other announcements as well such as the end of tax breaks for electric vehicles, but we all knew that was eventually going to end.

All in all, the prime minister's announcement is well received, but I hope that the lemon law is well thought out and can finally end the traumatic experience that some buyers face with their new or used vehicles.

Tribute to Malaysian motorsport

Volkswagen unveils Golf GTI Sepang Edition



VOLKSWAGEN Passenger Cars Malaysia (VPCM) has launched the Golf GTI Sepang Edition, a special variant that becomes the first car in Malaysia to officially bear the Sepang International Circuit (SIC) insignia.

Limited in number and proudly local in inspiration, the model celebrates Malaysia's motorsport heritage and Volkswagen's engineering precision in a single package.

For over twenty years, the Sepang International Circuit has been the heart of motorsport in Malaysia, playing host to global events such as Formula 1 and MotoGP while symbolising the nation's growing automotive culture.

The Golf GTI Sepang Edition pays homage to this spirit of speed and innovation with a design and performance philosophy that captures the adrenaline of the track.

Based on the renowned Golf GTI platform, the Sepang Edition introduces subtle yet striking design updates that set it apart.

The exterior carries a distinctive Sepang Edition badge on the rear and a UV gloss B-pillar logo, accompanied by 18-inch Richmond matte gunmetal alloy wheels fitted with dynamic "GTI" hub caps.

Black accents extend across the roof, front spoiler, side skirts and rear diffuser, giving the hot hatch a more assertive and motorsport-inspired stance.

Finishing touches such as the black mirror caps, Sepang Edition base plates, bespoke GTI floor mats and side graphics complete the exclusive look.

Inside, the cabin maintains the Golf GTI's familiar blend of sportiness and refinement, enhanced by details that reflect its limited status.

Practical touches have also been added, including the Universal Traffic Recorder 2.0 dashcam system with Sony Starvis night-vision sensors, official Volkswagen tint, and a certificate of authenticity with a custom key holder. These elements reinforce its identity as a true collector's piece for enthusiasts.

Exclusively available for the Malaysian market and priced from RM262,990, the Golf GTI Sepang Edition comes with the Volkswagen Assurance Package, which includes seven years of free maintenance, a five-year unlimited mileage warranty, and five years of complimentary roadside assistance.

Proton e.MAS 5 phenomenon

PROTON New Energy Technology Sdn Bhd (Pro-Net), a wholly owned subsidiary of Proton, has recorded a staggering 1,607 bookings for the all-new Proton e.Mas 5 within the first 24 hours of opening orders on Oct 4.

The launch was announced through a special live broadcast from Proton e.MAS Nilai – the company's first "Open for Booking" livestream of its kind.

The broadcast attracted around 572,000 live viewers and has since exceeded one million total views, with engagement continuing to climb nationwide.

Priced between RM60,000 and RM80,000, the Proton e.Mas 5 aims to redefine what Malaysians can expect from an electric car.

It offers the agility of a B-segment model while delivering the kind of interior comfort usually reserved for larger C-segment vehicles.

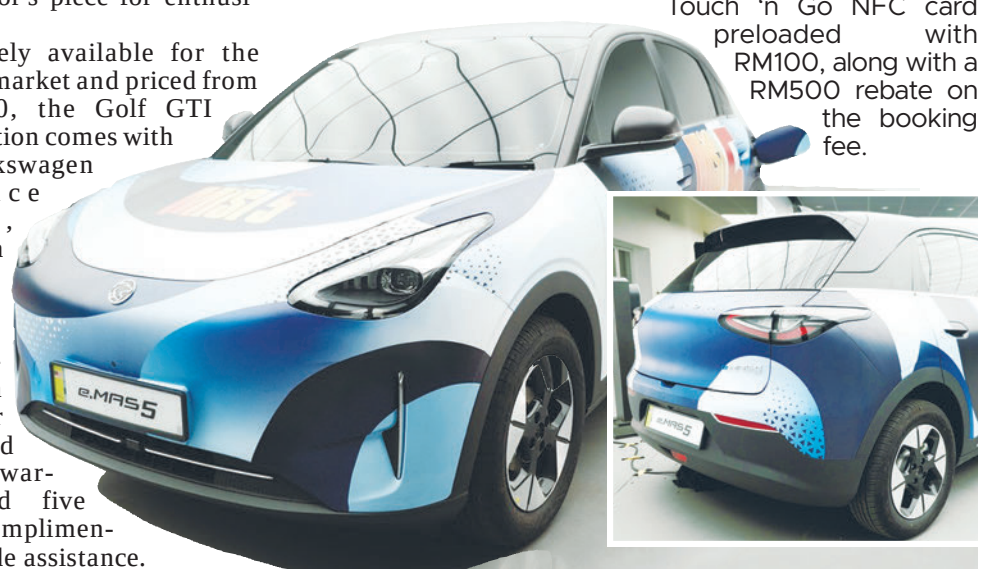
Compact and city-friendly on the outside yet surprisingly spacious inside, it blends practicality with a premium sense of comfort.

The e.Mas 5 also promises a fun and engaging drive thanks to its rear-wheel-drive setup, class-leading turning radius, and intuitive features such as real-time charging status integration.

Bookings for the car can be made online via the official Proton e.MAS website or in person at any of the 43 e.MAS dealerships across Malaysia.

Customers can secure their unit for just RM99, which also comes with early-bird rewards.

Those who book early will receive a limited-edition Touch 'n Go NFC card preloaded with RM100, along with a RM500 rebate on the booking fee.





On a roll

Omoda Jaecoo Malaysia celebrates 20,000 vehicle deliveries in 14 months

OMODA JAECOO MALAYSIA has achieved a remarkable milestone with the delivery of its 20,000th vehicle, a feat reached just 14 months after the brand's debut in July 2024.

The achievement underscores the company's rapid rise in Malaysia's automotive landscape, backed by strong consumer trust and the global success of its parent company, Chery Group.

Since entering the Malaysian market, Omoda Jaecoo has positioned itself as a premium challenger in the SUV segment.

The brand's local line-up now includes the Jaecoo J7, J7 Phev, Omoda C9, and Jaecoo J8, supported by nearly 50 authorised dealerships, a dedicated parts warehouse, and local assembly operations at its Shah Alam plant.

This strategic foundation has helped Omoda Jaecoo secure a spot among Malaysia's Top 5 automotive marques in the first half of 2025.

The brand's growth reflects the larger trajectory of Chery Group, which made history in 2025 as the first Chinese automaker to export more than five million vehicles globally.

That same year, Chery achieved the "Double 500" milestone – ranking 233rd on the Fortune Global 500 and 59th on the Fortune China 500 – further solidifying its position as one of the fastest-growing automotive companies in the world.

A significant part of this success comes from Chery's commitment to New Energy Vehicles (NEVs), which accounted for 40% of its total exports in the first half of 2025.

Central to this effort is the Omoda Jaecoo Super Hybrid System (SHS), featured in the Jaecoo J7 PHEV.

This advanced setup pairs a 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol engine with an electric motor, a dedicated hybrid transmission, and an 18.3kWh lithium iron phosphate battery.

Together, they produce an impressive 347PS and 525Nm of torque, achieving a pure electric range of nearly 100km and a combined driving range exceeding 1,200km, all while maintaining fuel consumption as low as 4.77L/100km.

To commemorate this milestone, Omoda Jaecoo Malaysia announced a range of exclusive ownership benefits, including seven years of complimentary service or RM5,000 in rewards for new J7 Phev owners.

Attractive financing packages are also being offered across theJ7 2WD and AWD variants, as well as the Omoda C9 2WD and AWD.

To further strengthen its growing customer community, Omoda Jaecoo is also rolling out a series of online contests inviting owners to share their experiences on social media.

The initiative aims to celebrate the brand's journey while connecting with its expanding network of loyal drivers across the country – a fitting continuation of Omoda Jaecoo's story of trust, innovation, and ambition.

BMW revives a legend



BMW has unveiled the M2 Turbo Design Edition, a tribute to one of its most celebrated performance icons – the BMW 2002 Turbo of the 1970s.

The special-edition coupe takes direct inspiration from the original's distinctive tricolour livery, blending motorsport heritage with modern M engineering.

Finished in Alpine White, the car stands out with hand-painted BMW Motorsport stripes running along the front and rear.

The classic blue, purple, and red accents wrap around the bonnet and continue across the boot lid, while a single offset stripe runs over the carbon fibre roof, creating a striking connection between past and present.

The power dome on the bonnet proudly displays a black "Turbo" graphic, and a subtle carbon fibre spoiler adds a refined finishing touch.

Standard fitment includes black M Dual-Spoke alloy wheels, with the option to upgrade to M Performance wheels in matte gold bronze for a more distinctive look.

Inside, the M2 Turbo Design Edition echoes the same design theme. The door sills carry the "M2 turbo" script, and another Turbo logo sits ahead of the gear shifter – a nod to the car's inspiration.

The M Sport seats come upholstered in black vernasca leather, finished with the familiar M tricolour detailing.

For drivers seeking a more focused experience, M carbon bucket seats are available as an option, also featuring the same coloured accents.

Performance remains faithful to BMW M tradition. The car is powered by a 3.0-litre twin-turbocharged inline-six, producing 473hp and 550Nm of torque.

Power is sent to the rear wheels through a six-speed manual transmission, making it the only gearbox option – a deliberate move to stay true to the spirit of the original 2002 Turbo, which was offered exclusively with manual transmissions.

The result is a 0–100kph time of just 4.1 seconds, reaffirming its place as a driver's car first and foremost.

The M2 Turbo Design Edition will be produced in very limited numbers, though BMW has yet to reveal how many units will be made.

Pricing begins at US$84,075 (around RM400,000), positioning it as a collector's piece for enthusiasts who appreciate the link between BMW's rich motorsport past and its modern performance philosophy.

SHORTS

HYUNDAI STARIA OPEN FOR BOOKING

Hyundai Motor Malaysia has officially opened bookings for the locally assembled Hyundai Staria, now produced at the company's plant in Kulim, Kedah.

This marks another key milestone for Hyundai's presence in Malaysia, offering a premium MPV that blends futuristic design, practicality, and comfort – now made closer to home.

The CKD Staria arrives with refreshed exterior colour options, including Jet Black, Snow Flake White Pearl, Meteor Grey, and Stormy Sea, giving customers a variety of shades to match different personalities and preferences.

Priced between RM179,888 and RM267,888, the locally assembled Staria is available in several variants with configurations for either seven or ten passengers, making it a versatile choice for families, businesses, and executive transport alike.

Under the bonnet, all variants are powered by a 2.2-litre four-cylinder turbodiesel engine that produces 177PS at 3,800rpm.

Most versions deliver 430Nm of torque between 1,500 and 2,500 rpm, ensuring strong pulling power for highway cruising or heavy loads.

The Prestige Hybrid model, however, offers a slightly different tune, delivering 367Nm between 1,000 and 4,000rpm for smoother, more efficient acceleration.

Every model comes paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission that sends power to the front wheels, providing a refined and comfortable drive.

SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED

BYD Sime Motors, the official distributor of BYD vehicles in Malaysia, has wasted no time getting its latest model, the all-new BYD Seal 6, into customers' hands.

In a remarkable show of efficiency, more than 100 units have already been delivered within just a week of the model's official debut, signalling strong demand and an equally strong operational rollout.

The C-segment electric sedan, available in Arctic White, Harbour Grey, and Misty Blue, has now arrived at BYD showrooms across both Peninsular and East Malaysia.

The first batch of owners have already received their cars, marking the Seal 6's swift appearance on local roads.

This rapid delivery reflects BYD Sime Motors' commitment to ensuring that customers don't have to wait long to experience the latest addition to its growing electric line-up.

With nationwide deliveries now underway, Malaysians can see, touch, and test drive the BYD Seal 6 themselves.

The sleek electric sedan promises a smooth and responsive driving experience, combining performance, refinement, and practicality in a package that's set to challenge the segment's benchmarks.

Beyond the car itself, BYD Sime Motors is taking steps to support Malaysia's wider transition to electric mobility.

The company plans to expand its dealership network from 37 to 50 outlets by 2026, enhancing accessibility to sales, aftersales support, and charging facilities nationwide.

This expansion forms part of BYD's long-term commitment to strengthen its footprint and accelerate EV adoption across the country.

Solve The Phrase And Sudoku

#1

W _ _ _ _ O R
_ O _ _ _

Hint: Time and tide...

Letters Remaining = ATNIFM

#2

_ H E _ _ F E
O F _ _ H O W _ _ _ _

Hint: Taylor Swift's 12th album

Letters Remaining = TRGAISL

#3

_ H _
_ O _ G
W _ _ _

Hint: Stephen King's novel

Letters Remaining = LNTKAE

#4

_ _ _ _ O N
_ _ _ N _ O _ _ S T

Hint: Lots of trees here

Letters Remaining = RIFZMAE

#5

S _ N
_ E _ _ S

Hint: Tourism Malaysia 2026 mascot

Letters Remaining = AUBR

#6

F _ _ _ T
F _ _ T _ _ L L
_ _ L L _ _ N _ _ _ _

Hint: Ronaldo

Letters Remaining = AOEBISR

6				1			3	
5	1			3	4		8	9
3	4	8				1		
	6	9	3				5	8
	5		8	4	6			7
7	8					3	6	
1	2	6	9	8	7	5	4	3
9			1	6		8	7	2
8		5				6		1

8	1	3	6		9		5	2
4			8	3	1	7		6
		6		2	5	3	8	1
	4							7
	2	8		5	7	9	3	4
7					4		2	5
2		7		9			4	3
	8	4	7		3		6	9
			2		6		7	

GIANTS VS TITANS
Gamification for a better planet from FIRST RAY

Answers will be uploaded on Sunday, October 26 @ thesun.my/puzzles

Your weekend horoscope


In feng shui, not all views are blessings.

Scenic view but lacks support

Feng shui dangers of glass homes

IN the modern age of sleek architecture and panoramic views, full-glass homes and condominiums have become a symbol of luxury and prestige. Whether it is an entire balcony made of glass or a living room wrapped in floor-to-ceiling windows, the openness offers an unobstructed connection with nature – or so it seems.

But in feng shui, not all views are blessings. In fact, a full-glass home with nothing but an empty landscape, highway or ocean in front may be one of the most misunderstood architectural choices when it comes to energy balance.

What's missing? The Black Tortoise and Green Dragon. In classical feng shui, every property benefits from the four celestial animals:

- Black Tortoise at the back: provides protection and support.
- Green Dragon on the left: offers strength and opportunity.
- White Tiger on the right: gives balance and control.
- Red Phoenix at the front: opens space for vision and movement.

A home with a fully open glass facade facing only emptiness – without a proper "backing" like a hill, wall, or solid structure behind – lacks the Black Tortoise.

It is like sitting on a chair with no backrest: visually impressive, but energetically exhausting. Residents may feel unsupported, constantly needing to "stand on their own" without help.

Similarly, without the Green Dragon or White Tiger – in the form of neighboring structures or terrain – the qi becomes too scattered, unable to "settle" or nourish the space within.

Illusion of freedom

Yes, the view is stunning. But feng shui is not just about aesthetics – it is about containment of qi.

When the energy from the external environment (such as the ocean, wide roads, or empty land) rushes toward the property with nothing to slow or embrace it, it can create a sense of instability.

Over time, this might manifest as restless sleep, inconsistent career paths, or strained relationships.

Here's what to do

- Add layers: Use curtains, layered blinds, or privacy screens to "soften" the energy entering from wide glass fronts.
- Strengthen your backing: A solid feature wall behind your main seating or bed can symbolically replace a missing Black Tortoise.
- Position furniture strategically: Always sit with your back against a wall or solid surface, not facing out toward emptiness.

Luxury does not have to come at the cost of stability. When you align design with feng shui principles, you create a space that supports you – not just impresses your guests.

***This** article is contributed by metaphysics researcher Daniel Siew. Discover more at www.danielsiew.com*

ARIES
March 21 – April 19
Your bold nature pushes you to take initiative in moments that need a clear voice. People may turn to you for guidance, and your directness helps bring quick solutions. Your energy is strong, but pacing yourself keeps you from burning out too quickly. In personal connections, honesty brings clarity.

TAURUS
April 20 – May 20
Your steady approach helps you remain calm when life feels a little unpredictable. Practical matters may need attention, but clear thinking helps you stay in control. Simple routines bring comfort and keep stress low. Money, home or personal security may be on your mind, and small, careful steps work best.

GEMINI
May 21 – June 20
Your curious energy makes it easy to connect with people and share your thoughts. Conversations may open doors to opportunities or help clear up misunderstandings. Creative ideas come quickly, and focusing on the ones that truly excite you brings meaningful progress. Too many distractions can scatter your energy.

CANCER
Your caring nature draws people in, and your presence may offer comfort to someone who needs it. Emotional clarity becomes easier when you give yourself quiet space to reflect. Home, family or personal connections may feel especially important, and simple gestures of support bring strong bonds.

LEO
July 23 – Aug 22
Your confidence encourages others to follow your lead. Opportunities to express your creativity may appear, and sharing your ideas can spark excitement in those around you. Your warmth builds closeness, especially when you balance it with sincere attention to others.

VIRGO
Aug 23 – Sept 22
Your careful nature helps you handle responsibilities with ease. Tasks that require focus or planning may feel smoother as you approach them step by step. Others may turn to you for guidance because they trust your reliability. Remember, perfection is not required to make real progress.

LIBRA
Sept 23 – Oct 22
Your gentle nature makes it easy to bring people together. Communication flows more smoothly when you stay calm, even during tricky conversations. You may feel drawn to peaceful surrounding, and creating harmony in your space lifts your spirit. Kindness and fairness deepen trust.

SCORPIO
Oct 23 – Nov 21
Your determination helps you face challenges with quiet strength. Strong emotions may rise, but self-awareness turns them into powerful motivation. Honest conversations bring understanding, especially when you let others see your softer side. Your focus allows you to notice what others might miss, making it easier to solve complex problems.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov 22 – Dec 21
Your adventurous spirit encourages you to explore new experiences and fresh ideas. A lively spark draws people toward you, and conversations can lead to inspiring opportunities. Your optimism naturally lifts those around you, making teamwork feel easy and enjoyable. Be mindful not to spread yourself too thin.

CAPRICORN
Dec 22 – Jan 19
Your focus helps you manage responsibilities without losing sight of what matters most. Goals may feel clearer, making it easier to move ahead with confidence. Others may notice your dedication and trust your guidance. Balancing your hard work with rest keeps your energy strong.

AQUARIUS
Jan 20 – Feb 18
Your original way of thinking sets you apart and inspires those around you. Group activities or friendships may bring new insights that expand your perspective. Spending quiet moments alone helps you stay grounded. Sharing your ideas openly can lead to opportunities.

PISCES
Feb 19 – March 20
Your gentle and thoughtful energy helps you connect deeply with others. People may feel drawn to your kindness, and your calm presence can ease tension. Creative outlets give your emotions a place to flow, helping you stay clear and focused. It is important to protect your energy.

302 Jobs

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Quartararo grabs pole

French rider takes top spot after record-breaking lap in Australia



Monster Energy Yamaha MotoGP team's French MotoGP rider Fabio Quartararo speeds through a corner at the Australian GP on Philip Island yesterday. – *AFPPIC*

FRENCHMAN Fabio Quartararo said his pole position at the Australian Grand Prix was "really special" after the Yamaha rider shattered the lap record at Phillip Island yesterday, narrowly beating Aprilia's Marco Bezzecchi to the top spot.

Quartararo clocked a stunning time of one minute and 26.465 seconds, edging Italian Bezzecchi by 0.031 seconds to claim his fifth pole position of the season.

The 26-year-old last earned pole at the Dutch Grand Prix in June.

"Really nice. It was a long time since Assen!" Quartararo said. "Today is a really special one because I didn't feel ready to make really a 26.4. The goal was to make 26.7. So, I'm super happy.

"Also, I think our pace is not so bad.

"So, focus on the sprint and let's try to make a great first lap, which will be really important."

Bezzecchi, who narrowly missed out on pole position to Quartararo, hit a seagull as he left the grid for the warm-up lap at Phillip Island. But the 26-year-old Italian kept his composure and overtook Fernandez with three laps remaining in the 13-lap sprint to seal back-to-back sprint wins.

"It was pretty hard because at the beginning. I hit a big bird, unfortunately for him, especially. But also, for me, as I got a scare. But luckily nothing was broken on the bike, and I am very sorry for this, of course," Bezzecchi said.

"When we started the sprint, I had a lot of fun as Raul was impressive at the beginning, he was super quick. I couldn't catch him and once I did, I made a mistake, so I had to put myself through some difficult laps again.

"But it was a fantastic job, I am very happy to win today. This is for my team, my guys and all my fans!"

Bezzecchi, who faces a double long lasp penalty in today's race due to his collision with MotoGP champion Marc Marquez at the Indonesian Grand Prix, continued his strong form after a stunning comeback to win the Indonesia sprint earlier this month.

Fernandez, who started fourth on the grid, made a flying start and led for much of the race but ultimately had to settle for second place.

"I was just very relaxed on the bike and just tried not to make any mistakes," the Spaniard said after securing his second successive sprint podium finish.

"I saw that Marco came with a strong pace and I tried my maximum. And when I saw that I wasn't able to follow Marco, I just tried to survive because on this kind of track, you need to keep the rear tyre.

"But anyway, I'm really happy, thanks to my team and my family. I think this is very important to a lot of us, and let's try to keep it this way, as also in Mandalika, we got some good results, so let's try to enjoy the moment."

Home hope Jack Miller of Prima Pramac thrilled Australian fans by becoming the first local rider since Casey Stoner in 2012 to start on the front row at Phillip Island.

"The Aussie fans are out here in numbers. It's unreal to see," Miller said. I'm looking forward to be back on the front row and, honestly, on a bike that we can fight with today and tomorrow.

"Let's see what we can get, we'll try and keep our nose clean."

Spanish duo Raul Fernandez and Pedro Acosta rounded off the top five.

Alex Marquez, second in the riders' championship, secured sixth place, while twice MotoGP champion Francesco Bagnaia will start in a disappointing 11th position in yesterday's sprint and today's main event. – Reuters

322 Notices

DEWAN BANDARAYA KUALA LUMPUR

FEDERAL TERRITORY (PLANNING ACT) 1982 (AKTA267)
FEDERAL TERRITORY (PLANNING) (APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION) (FEDERAL TERRITORY OF KUALA LUMPUR) RULES 2025

RULE 3

NOTICE TO OBTAIN VIEWS

The Mayor has received an application for the **proposed development of 2 blocks comprising a total of 1,095 units, consisting of 657 units of 30-storey Residential apartments and 438 units of 32-storey Perumahan Penjawat Awam (PPAM) residences, with resident facilities, with a density of 600 persons per acre (ppa) on Lot 80140 (formerly Lot PT 50001), Jalan 27/56, Setiawangsa, Mukim Ulu Kelang, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.**

(Ref: DBKL.JPRB.10278/84/8)

Pursuant to the provisions of Rule 3, **Federal Territory (Planning) (Application For Planning Permission) (Federal Territory Of Kuala Lumpur) Rules 2025,** the Mayor grants the registered land owners in the surrounding area a chance to submit their views towards this application.

If any registered land owners in the surrounding area decides to do so, they are required to submit in writing their views towards this application addressed to the **Pengarah, Jabatan Perancangan Bandaraya, Tingkat 9, Menara DBKL 1, Jalan Raja Laut, 50350 Kuala Lumpur** and through email: **jprb@dbkl.gov.my**.

These views must be submitted within 2 weeks from the date this notice is published, clearly stating the owner's name, owner's lot number, postal address and DBKL reference number.

Date: **19th OCTOBER 2025**

DATUK BANDAR KUALA LUMPUR



Monuments, monkeys and McIlroy

India's 'special' golf course – a green sanctuary steeped in history

RORY MCILROY and centuries of history blended beautifully as the Ryder Cup winner tackled a "special" golf course this week in the Indian capital, teeming with wildlife and usually hidden from view.

Nestled in the heart of New Delhi, a city of nearly 30 million people, Delhi Golf Club (DGC) is a green sanctuary steeped in history.

Its lush fairways wind past centuries-old Mughal-domed tombs and weathered monuments, offering a surreal blend of elite sport and crumbling heritage.

For most of the public, glimpsing this extraordinary mix – home to the 18-hole Lodhi Course and the nine-hole Peacock Course – is usually only possible by peering through its entrance gates.

"I actually said to the boys on the 17th tee, it was hard to believe how old these buildings are, these monuments," said McIlroy's Ryder Cup teammate Shane Lowry.

He led after the opening round of the DP World India Championship on Thursday with an 8-under par 64.

"It's pretty cool."

On the course, elaborate tombs of the city's past rulers poke through tangled trees that are home to peacocks, troops of monkeys and mongooses.

"It's really, really special," said Tommy Fleetwood, another Ryder Cup hero from Team Europe, returning to the venue for the first time since 2016.

"Golf around the world is so cool, getting to explore different places, different courses, different histories wherever we are," he added.

"This is one of those really cool places."

The inaugural US$4 million (RM17m) India Championship, which concludes today, has attracted a stellar field.

Prime among them is five-time major winner McIlroy, who is making his debut in India.

Kapil Dev, president of the Professional Golf Tour of India, has called the tournament "a landmark moment for Indian golf."

Central to that is the DGC, which was founded in the 1930s and later reshaped by British planners. Club history recounts how colonial officers, after the capital of British-ruled India shifted to Delhi, pushed through the forests using elephants to map the course through the overgrown ruins.

The tight, tree-lined fairways interweave with a treasure trove of archaeological remnants.

More than a dozen historical monuments dot the course, including the striking 17th-century Lal Bangla tombs and others of the 15th century Lodhi dynasty.

"Tee off on a trail of history," the club history purrs.

"Here lie the end of dynasties, the relics of mighty empires, ruins which bear testimony to an age of glory."

Club president Raj Khosla spoke about the "magnificent scenic beauty" and "uniqueness of a wonderful course" interweaved with monuments.

Swedish golfer Simon Forsstrom, pausing on the 14th tee to admire a red sandstone tomb behind him – a miniature echo of the Taj Mahal – was equally impressed.

"I think this is the only one with old monuments that are historic. I haven't seen these at any other course," he told AFP.

"You stand up high next to the monument, it's a fun experience."

For all its grandeur, the DGC is not India's oldest course.

That distinction belongs to the 18-hole Royal Calcutta Golf Club, founded in 1829 and reputed to be the oldest outside Britain. – AFP



Rory McIlroy plays a shot during the DP World India Championship 2025. – *AFPPIC*

Flawless Fleetwood jumps into India Championship lead

TOMMY FLEETWOOD played a flawless second round of 8-under to move into the lead at the India Championship on Friday, while Ryder Cup teammate Rory McIlroy was six strokes off the lead.

The Englishman hit eight birdies including five on the back nine to open up a one-shot advantage ahead of overnight leader Shane Lowry at the picturesque Delhi Golf Club.

Fleetwood said playing alongside Lowry and Europe's Ryder Cup-winning captain Luke Donald got the best out of him.

"Yeah, unbelievable three-ball," said Fleetwood. "I think because you're so comfortable with each other, you do your own thing… It's always like a bonus when you're with two guys that you're really close with.

"It has been a great two days.

"I feel like if I'm playing with Shane for the next two days, I'm doing something right probably."

Lowry had an up and down round and ended with a bogey for a 3-under 69 in round two to take joint second place with 2023 British Open champion Brian Harman of the US.

Japan's Keita Nakajima kept up his impressive play from round one to reach 10-under for the tournament, two strokes behind Fleetwood.

The Lodhi course in the heart of Delhi is a tight strip with little margin for error despite the birds, peacocks and Mughal monuments making for a serene backdrop.

"It's a pretty tough course to learn, really," said Harman. "I mean, there's some really awkward tee shots. It's a little different than what we're used to, but I enjoyed the course."

McIlroy comes into the tournament as the star attraction in his India debut after his crucial role in Europe's Ryder Cup victory, but had to fight to stay in contention.

He looked visibly frustrated with back-to-back bogeys on the 11th and 12th holes, the second after missing a three-foot par putt.

But the five-time major winner soon lifted his game with four birdies over the closing six holes to post a second consecutive 69 as every putt drew applause from the crowd.

McIlroy looked relieved after his birdie on the final hole as he shook hands with cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar.

"I felt like my approach play was pretty scrappy, missed an iron shot right on four, so that's not ideal," McIlroy, who has gone for a driver-free strategy at the Delhi course, told reporters.

"Being a little tidier and keep the bogeys off the scorecard, I think I can have a good weekend and get closer to the leaders." – AFP

Why Ryder Cup players get free pass to season-ending event

RORY MCILROY broke new ground by playing in India this week. While the Northern Irishman widens his golfing horizons, the DP World Tour enters the final phase of this year's Race to Dubai.

There are only three more events following the India Championship; the following week's Genesis Championship in South Korea – which concludes the "Back Nine" phase of the schedule.

And then the final two tournaments in the Middle East.

These big money 'play-off' events in Abu Dhabi and Dubai are reserved for the top 70 and then top 50 in the standings.

But for the likes of Tommy Fleetwood and Shane Lowry, who are also in this week's field in India, there is less pressure than you might imagine.

Comfortably outside the top 70, at first glance it would appear both need high finishes from their trip to the Delhi Golf Club to keep alive their seasons. But, in fact, they are already assured of their places in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

This is due to a little publicised but pragmatic loophole whereby members of Europe's Ryder Cup team are also considered eligible for next month's closing tournaments.

Fleetwood, who won the PGA Tour's playoffs with his stirring victory at August's Tour Championship in Atlanta, lies 94th in the European tour's season-long table. Lowry, who sank the putt that retained the Ryder Cup, is 155th.

Other European teammates who can potentially benefit are Ludvig Aberg (72nd) and Sepp Straka (147th).

This might question the integrity of a playoff system, which by definition is supposed to bring cut-throat competitive jeopardy, but this scenario also illustrates realities faced by the Wentworth-based DP World Tour.

They are reliant on big backers such as DP World, who are also the title sponsors of this week's event in India. They need the biggest stars at their biggest events to justify the investment, which runs to millions of dollars.

In the past the PGA and European tours were deadly rivals they are now inextricably linked thanks to the strategic alliance that underpins DP World Tour prize funds.

While Marco Penge, last week's winner of the Open De Espana, has moved into McIlroy's wing mirrors as his closest rival at the top of the Race to Dubai, much of the interest for the rest of the season will have an American bias.

Some observers see this scenario as evidence that the DP World Tour is now nothing more than a feeder for big brother on the other side of the pond. Certainly this is the time of the year where the realities and compromises of men's professional golf seem at their most evident. – Agencies



Paolini, Rybakina reach Ningbo semis

ITALIAN second seed Jasmine Paolini kept her hopes of qualifying for the WTA Finals alive with a gritty comeback win over Belinda Bencic, beating Switzerland's Tokyo Olympic gold medallist 5-7, 7-5, 6-3 in the Ningbo Open quarterfinals on Friday.

Paolini will face third-seed Elena Rybakina in the semis, after the Russian-born Kazakh took less than an hour to beat Ajla Tomljanovic 6-2, 6-0 later in the day.

Twice Grand Slam finalist Paolini needs a win over Rybakina in the last four to qualify for next month's WTA Finals in Riyadh.

The contest against Bencic at the WTA 500 hardcourt tournament, which lasted a marathon three hours and 22 minutes, marked the longest match of Paolini's season.

Bencic, 28, served for the match at 5-4 in the second set but was unable to close it out. Her momentum was further interrupted in the deciding set when she took a medical timeout due to a thigh issue while trailing 4-3.

"One of the toughest I ever played, honestly," Paolini, who was the runner-up at last year's French Open and Wimbledon, said. "Belinda, she's an amazing player and a very good person. Today she deserved to win as well, so it was really tough.

"I'm happy I stayed there, because at the beginning I had too many mistakes. I couldn't find my best tennis, but then I just tried to stay there every point and turn the match somehow."

Aryna Sabalenka, Iga Swiatek, Coco Gauff, Amanda Anisimova, Jessica Pegula and Madison Keys have all qualified for the season-ending championship of the WTA Tour in Riyadh, with two spots still up for grabs.

Rybakina also remained in contention for a place at the WTA Finals, as she landed seven aces while a struggling Tomljanovic made nine double faults.

Former Wimbledon champion Rybakina has now won 50 matches on the tour this year and qualified for seven semifinals.

"Of course it would be nice to qualify (for the WTA Finals). But I know for this I still need to win a lot of matches. Not only here, but also next week," Rybakina said.

"Today I think I served well. It's not easy to play Ajla. Today a lot of things went my way. Also some lines which I caught. Overall, happy I won in straight sets. Looking forward to tomorrow."

Fourth seed Ekaterina Alexandrova brushed aside American McCartney Kessler 6-3, 6-3 to set up a last-four clash with fellow Russian and seventh seed Diana Shnaider, who beat local favourite Zhu Lin 2-6, 6-3, 6-1 on Friday. – Reuters



'History has been made'

Monaco chief hails Vacherot's Shanghai win

MONACO Tennis Federation president Melanie-Antoinette de Massy hailed Valentin Vacherot's *(pic)* Shanghai Masters victory last Sunday as a historic milestone for the principality, marking the federation's first-ever Masters 1000 singles title.

Vacherot completed a fairytale run at the tournament on Sunday, rallying from a set down to defeat his cousin, Frenchman Arthur Rinderknech, in the final and secure his first ATP title.

"It's extraordinary," de Massy told *Reuters*.

"As a sports achievement, winning a Masters 1000 title, the first in singles for our federation. History has been made."

With the win, Vacherot rocketed from No. 204 in the world to No. 40.

"It's unreal what just happened," Vacherot said after his victory in the Chinese city.

"I have no idea what's happening right now, I'm not in a dream, it's just crazy. I'm just so happy with my performance these past two weeks."

Monaco had previously celebrated two Masters 1000 crowns won by Hugo Nys in doubles. De Massy said that Vacherot's run in Shanghai – which she flew out to witness from the semifinals – capped a "tremendous year" for the tiny nation's tennis programme.

She credited fellow Monegasque players for setting the tone.

"Valentin keeps saying Hugo and Romain (Arneodo) inspired him. They opened the way, and now he's triumphing in singles."

The federation chief, who also presides over the Monte-Carlo Country Club where Vacherot trained as a junior, described the 26-year-old as "a remarkable young man" whose speech after the final reflected a tight-knit, family-style setup that blends the national team with up-and-coming juniors.

"We always try to include the kids in everything," she said, adding that junior players wear the same tracksuits as the Davis Cup team and often share courts and mealtimes with the seniors.

"Valentin definitely gave them a dream this weekend," she said.

De Massy said the Prince of Monaco, Albert II, followed the matches closely and congratulated Vacherot at a homecoming event in Monaco after the final.

She also placed the victory among Monaco's biggest recent sporting moments, citing Charles Leclerc's Formula One successes and past national achievements in sailing and bobsleigh.

"There aren't many times we can say we have an athlete winning major international events. We're extremely proud," she said.

Monaco, with a population of around 40,000 and an area of about two square kilometres, is "punching above its weight" in tennis, de Massy said, noting the men's team's current Davis Cup ranking of 44th among more than 160 nations.

"For a country this small, that's a remarkable achievement. I hope this is just the beginning." – Reuters

TOUCHLINES

CRYSTAL PALACE are planning to sell England defender Marc Guehi in January and Liverpool are no longer the frontrunners to sign the 25-year-old, with Barcelona, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich all interested.

ENGLAND and Crystal Palace midfielder Adam Wharton, 21, is Manchester United's top transfer target for January, although he could cost around £70m (RM397m).

LIVERPOOL and Chelsea were both rebuffed by Everton in the summer after expressing their interest in 23-year-old England centreback Jarrad Branthwaite.

SPURS and Liverpool are both keen on Bournemouth and Ghana winger Antoine Semenyo, 25.

INTER MILAN have dismissed rumours they are set to sign Brazil forward Neymar, 33, in January, after his contract expires at Santos.

MANCHESTER UNITED boss Ruben Amorim is a huge admirer of Italy and Inter Milan left-back Federico Dimarco, 27, but the player is keen to remain at the San Siro for the time being.

SUNDERLAND will not renew their interest in Bologna and Colombia defender Jhon Lucumi in the January transfer window after having an offer of £24m (RM136m) rejected for the 27-year-old in the summer.

BARCELONA goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen has not yet made a decision on whether he will stay at the club in January, with the 33-year-old Germany international keen to play before next summer's World Cup.

JUVENTUS are keen to bring Italy midfielder Sandro Tonali back to Serie A but Newcastle are determined to hang on to the 25-year-old.

NEWCASTLE have agreed to pay £350,000 plus significant bonuses to Barnsley for Josh Kenchington, 15, beating Manchester United, Tottenham and Brighton to the England U-15 defender's signature.

RB LEIPZIG have placed a price tag of £87m (RM434m) on exciting 18-year-old Ivory Coast winger Yan Diomande.

WOLVES are not expected to make any major signings in January and likely to hang on to their key players, including Brazilian midfielder Andre, 24, who was a target for Juventus last summer.

Tale of two managers

BY RICHARD JOLLY

IT IS Liverpool against Manchester United and a manager is on a historically bad run. Not Ruben Amorim, either, who has equalled his longest winning sequence in the Premier League as United head coach (admittedly, that is only one victory).

Traditional rivals pursuing different paths but with a shared conundrum, with each searching for the appropriate balance between attack and defence.

But Arne Slot has suffered three successive defeats for the first time: in his managerial career, not merely in his reign on Merseyside.

They have been counterparts and opposites, the men in charge of England's two biggest clubs, appointed within a few months of each other, when there was a scenario whereby Amorim could have got what is instead Slot's job, after comparable records in their homeland.

Each took a club that was somewhat starved of success in the previous two decades and feeling very much the third force in their respective countries, to the title, along with making a greater impact in continental competition. It marked each out as a rising star, attracting Premier League attention.

And there, perhaps, the similarities end, their paths diverging. Slot has won the Premier League, just the second time in 35 years Liverpool ended the season top. Amorim has come 15th, United's lowest finish for half a century.

Despite recent losses to Crystal Palace and Chelsea, Slot still averages 2.20 points per game in the division, more than double Amorim's 1.09. The Dutchman took more points in his first 16 top-flight matches in England than the Portuguese has in his entire tenure.

But, of course, Slot had the far more enviable inheritance. That amounted to timing – he took charge in the summer, but with a couple of months' notice before then, while Amorim was parachuted in mid-season – but also the squad and culture of the club.

He has often credited Jurgen Klopp; Amorim thanks his predecessor Erik ten Hag less, and has less to thank him for.

Amorim's advocates – a diminishing band as the evidence amounts that, actually, he isn't an outstanding manager – can wonder what he might have done at Anfield.

And yet, while he was portrayed as the frontrunner after Klopp delivered the bombshell he would stand down, Liverpool long insisted that he was not, and that no one was until they alighted on Slot.

What can be said, though, is that, even discounting Xabi Alonso, who soon made it apparent he preferred to stay at Bayer Leverkusen, Amorim was not even Liverpool's second choice: after Slot, they also admired Athletic Bilbao's Ernesto Valverde.

Liverpool were deterred in part by Amorim's insistence upon a back three. United were not, but perhaps should have been. Slot proved the seamless successor, Amorim the newcomer who prescribed change but brought the wrong sort.

They were evolutionary and revolutionary, but when last season ended, the innovative look was that United had half as many points as Liverpool.

Slot tweaked Klopp's 4-3-3 into a 4-2-3-1, reimagined some players – using Luis Diaz as a striker at times, Cody Gakpo solely on the left and Ryan Gravenberch as a defensive midfielder – but, in another respect, made so few alterations to his squad that none of his signings had started a League match by the time that Liverpool became champions.

Amorim used players in different positions, too, partly to cram them into his beloved 3-4-3, but with less vindication. If many of the existing squad progressed under Slot, too many regressed under Amorim.

But the summer offered another comparison. As they started to spend, much of their expenditure was in attack.

Amorim spent £200 million (RM1.16b) on three forwards, Slot £200 million on two, with a further £100 million (RM580m) on a No. 10 in Florian Wirtz.

Of those six expensive additions, only Hugo Ekitike and Bryan Mbeumo could be described as a success so far. Matheus Cunha, Alexander Isak and Wirtz will all go to Anfield looking for a first League goal in their new club's colours.

Liverpool have had more late winners and goals this season, but Amorim could argue United have shown more improvement in attack. Their xG is higher than Liverpool's. They have had more shots in the Premier League.

They have also gone out of the Carabao Cup to Grimsby and could be eight points behind Liverpool after Sunday..

Tactically, traditional rivals are pursuing different paths but with a shared conundrum. Each is searching for the appropriate balance between attack and defence.

Liverpool have lost it this season, after their £450 million (RM2.61m) spending spree. United have rarely had it under Amorim, which others – though not him – could attribute to 3-4-3, playing Bruno Fernandes in the centre of midfield and often using wingbacks who are really full-backs.

A quirk of Amorim's is that he can't seem to get through a game without substituting one of his centrebacks.

A quirk of Slot's is that, when chasing a winner, he will take one off, move Gravenberch back while only playing with one specialist central defender, in Van Dijk.

A reason, perhaps, for Liverpool's defensive troubles this season is that Slot has acquired two full-backs who may be more suited to playing wingback. They might have suited Amorim better.

Not that, given the six decades that have passed since Phil Chisnall was the last player to move directly between the two clubs, they can simply swap Jeremie Frimpong for Diogo Dalot.

But tomorrow provides a test for each. Slot's first flagship win as Liverpool manager was against United; but Ten Hag's United, who he unlocked with conspicuous ease.

Amorim has lost to many a manager in his troubled time at United, but not Slot: his side got a 2-2 draw at Anfield in January and, but for a late miss from Harry Maguire, could have won it.

A similar scoreline now would suggest United have more substance this season and extend Liverpool's mini-slump.

And, given this could be the season when Liverpool overtake United and become the first club to become champions of England 21 times, it could at least give Amorim an influence in the title race. – The Independent

SPORTS TOTO RESULTS

DRAW NO: 6035/2025 DATE: 18/10/2025 (SAT)
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TOTO 4D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

1st Prize	9245
2nd Prize	6250
3rd Prize	9584

Special		Consolation	
5206	6965	8771	9685
7899	0061	2884	1531
4881	3278	4075	4847
6444	5319	3313	7763
9583	4686	9897	0236

4D JACKPOT

Jackpot 1 RM 20,362,093.38

9245	6250	6250	9245
9245	9584	9584	9245
6250	9584	9584	6250

Jackpot 2 RM 448,401.42
Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

4D Zodiac 生肖

1st Prize	9245	+ MONKEY
2nd Prize	6250	+
3rd Prize	9584	+
4th Prize	Special Prize	+
5th Prize	Consolation Prize	+
6th Prize	Any 4D drawn number	

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2ND 6 4 1 2 4
3RD 1 3 5 3 7
4TH 8 2 8 8
5TH 2 8 8
6TH 8 8

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1st Prize	5877
2nd Prize	5006
3rd Prize	2261

Starters		Consolation	
8379	9439	2992	1564
6863	7140	6314	6576
5122	7560	2585	0751
3321	1705	1944	1659
4020	8231	6067	5097

1+3D Jackpot

Jackpot 1 RM3,530,307.60

5877 + 5006	5006 + 5877
5877 + 2261	2261 + 5877
5006 + 2261	2261 + 5006

Jackpot 2 RM131,788.20
Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

3+3D Bonus

1st Prize	Bonus	1st Prize Bonus
435 877 +	ROOSTER	RM260,000.00
2nd Prize	Bonus	2nd Prize Bonus
785 006 +	HORSE	RM410,000.00
3rd Prize	Bonus	3rd Prize Bonus
962 261 +	BOAR	RM579,097.10

Starters		Consolation	
468 379	979 439	222 992	061 564
616 863	347 140	596 314	956 576
505 122	117 560	262 585	130 751
693 321	521 705	191 944	461 659
494 020	008 231	576 067	395 097

3D

1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
877	006	261

3D Jackpot

Jackpot RM763,812.90

877 + 006 + 261	006 + 261 + 877
877 + 261 + 006	261 + 877 + 006
006 + 877 + 261	261 + 006 + 877

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SIDENETTING

'HARIMAU MALAYA STILL DEADLY'

The Harimau Malaya squad are capable of taking their game to a higher level even without the presence of the seven heritage players who are currently suspended, said former national player Mohd Nizaruddin Yusof. The two recent victories over Laos in the ongoing 2026 Asian Cup Qualifiers, which led to the team's world ranking rising to number 118, are proof that coach Peter Cklamovski's squad are still the real deal. Mohd Nizaruddin said the wins also proved that the national team still possessed quality players. "From how the national squad performed against Laos, I could see that we can rely on the players that we have at the moment. As we know, the Harimau Malaya squad can still go far on the international stage. I dare say that the matches against Laos were the best we have played in since the suspension of the seven heritage players," he said yesterday. However, he was quick to admit that Laos are not at the same level as the Harimau Malaya. He also hopes that the national players will continue to keep the winning momentum going when they take on Nepal in November.

COACH OPTIMISTIC IN TRW SEMIS BERTH

Kelantan The Real Warriors (TRW) assistant head coach Akmal Rizal Rakhli has not pressed the "panic button" to qualify for the semifinals in this season's FA Cup despite losing to Sabah FC on Saturday in the quarterfinal (first leg) at Sultan Muhammad IV Stadium. Akmal said he is still optimistic of his team advancing to the next round even though the advantage now favoured the opposing side. "The chance to reach the semi-finals is still there and I am confident that the players can overcome Sabah FC when they play in Kota Kinabalu in the second leg on Oct 29. My players can win if they play like they did tonight with full enthusiasm and create many chances, they just need to sharpen their finishing in attack," he told reporters after the match. Kelantan TRW needs to record a victory of at least 2-0 in the second leg in Kota Kinabalu to ensure their semifinal slot.

UPHILL BATTLE AWAITS PENANG FC

Penang FC head coach Wan Rohaimi Wan Ismail admitted that his squad faces a tough task against Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) in the FA Cup quarterfinal second leg at the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium (SSI) in Iskandar Puteri next week. However, he is optimistic that the fighting spirit and high commitment shown by his men during the first leg at the Bandaraya Stadium will be an important lesson to face the challenge on the opponent's ground. "I admit that the 90 minutes at SSI will be very, very difficult. That is their home ground and of course JDT will not give us any space. But I hope what the players showed tonight can continue. If they maintain the same focus and spirit, God willing, we can compete," he said at a press conference after the match on Saturday. He also stressed that it would not be easy for his team to last more than 45 minutes after the absence of Ahmad Irfan Mohd Noor who was shown a red card in the final minute of the half.

'Best local coach available'

NSFC 'strike gold' having secured former centreback as club gaffer



BY IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE
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NEGERI SEMBILAN FC believe they've struck gold by securing the services of highly respected local coach Nidzam Jamil for the 2025 season.

Describing Nidzam *(pic)* as one of the best local coach available, club CEO Faliq Firdaus Muhammad Rom said that the signing of the former centreback as NSFC's head coach is the key to the club's long-term vision of stability and sustainability.

"We're not a big-money club, but we're a club with a plan, and Nidzam believed in that," Faliq Firdaus told *theSun* in an exclusive interview at the club headquarters on Oct 13.

Faliq Firdaus said that the decision to pursue Nidzam came after careful discussions with the club's technical director and chairman, recognising the need for a strong leadership figure to guide a transitional squad.

"We knew this season was going to be the year we bounce back, So when Nidzam became available, we saw it as a big opportunity. We sat down with him and made it clear that this (NSFC) is a (long-term) project. We're not here for short-term success. We want sustainability."

Faliq Firdaus said that the management allowed Nidzam to bring in several players, though not an entirely new roster, as the club was committed to assessing and nurturing young talent.

"My technical director and Nidzam worked together on the squad list. There were players he wanted, and players the club already had. We found a middle ground. That collaboration was important."

Faliq Firdaus added that even top-tier national players were more willing to join when they heard Nidzam was coming in.

"He's respected, he plays beautiful football, and he works well with players. Everyone's happy."

"He's one of the best local coaches out there and we're lucky to have him."

Meanwhile, NSFC head coach Nidzam Jamil said he is excited to be part of the club's ambitious long-term project, which he believes aligns not only with his football philosophy but also with his personality and values.

"I chose Negeri Sembilan because I believe in this project. It's not just about the first team, but also the second and third teams, and even the club's economic structure. We want to develop not only the senior squad but also the younger generation to make the club not just competitive but a producer of future talents," he said.

Nidzam added that he feels a strong personal connection with the club and the state.

"My family and I feel close to this place. I like the club, I like the environment, and I like Seremban. I know a few of the players who have been here for some time, so I'm happy to be part of this family. One of the big reasons is also the supporters – Negeri Sembilan have a passionate fan base," he said.

He said one of the main missions of the NSFC project is to bring back pride and belief among fans.

"We want to make Negeri Sembilan great again. We've been quiet for the past few years, but now we want to restore that feeling, to give back hope and confidence to the fans that we're serious about this long-term project," he said.

On his football philosophy, Nidzam said his approach is not just about attacking play but about instilling hope through proactive football.

"This isn't just my style, it's a philosophy that's been built over time. We want to be brave, score more goals and show that creating chances reflects not just football ambition but also life's attitude, always moving forward," he said.

He stressed that his attacking approach fits well with the club's direction and the type of players in the squad.

"We want to create and play aggressively, going forward. This is not just a tactical idea but an organizational spirit. From management to coaches and players. Everyone wants to move forward together."

Commenting on player recruitment, Nidzam said some of the players brought in were carefully chosen to suit the team's playing style, including forwards, Jovan Motika and Josseph Eso, and promising young local players like Luqman Hakim Shamsudin.

"Esso works very hard both in attack and defence, while Motika brings flair on the left and has been scoring goals. We also have talented locals like Luqman, who has great potential."

When asked about strengthening the team in the upcoming transfer window, Nidzam said the priority remains promoting young players from the club's development squads.

"We have some injury issues and a few positions to consider, but I want to give opportunities to our youth players from the second and third teams. They have talent, but they need time and guidance.

"Of course, if the management agrees, we may add reinforcements in certain areas, but right now I'm very happy with the squad we have."

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SPECIAL		CONSOLATION	
6379	0035	8978	4755
3567	2646	4695	8510
6370	6232	2208	7101
3887	3096	4446	3559
1784	7493	0162	0214

4D Jackpot

Jackpot 1 RM3,323,733.95

8844 + 7610	8844 + 8061
7610 + 8844	7610 + 8061
8061 + 8844	8061 + 7610

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Jackpot 1 - Group 1 + Golden Number

Jackpot 2 RM100,000.00 PARTIALLY WON
Jackpot 2 - Group 2 + Golden Number

GROUP 1	4 4 1 0 6 1		
GROUP 2	4 4 1 0 6 _	OR	_ 4 1 0 6 1
GROUP 3	4 4 1 0 _ _	OR	_ _ 1 0 6 1
GROUP 4	4 4 1 _ _ _	OR	_ _ _ 0 6 1
GROUP 5	4 4 _ _ _ _	OR	_ _ _ _ 6 1
		OR	_ _ 1 0 _ _
GOLDEN NUMBER	1 8		

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SCAN ME



Chong Wei to lead BAM Performance Committee, vows close cooperation with coaches

NATIONAL badminton legend Datuk Seri Lee Chong Wei has been appointed as the chairman of the Badminton Association of Malaysia's (BAM) Performance Committee, marking a significant move to strengthen the national body's efforts in revitalising the sport's excellence.

BAM president Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz said Lee's appointment, along with three other new council members, was made based on their expertise and vast experience in their respective fields.

"We have appointed four new members of the BAM Council. Other than Datuk Seri Lee Chong Wei, we have Tan Sri Gooi Hoe Soon, Datuk Seri Shazalli Ramly and Datuk Sunil Abraham. They are all experts in their respective fields.

"And at the BAM Council, we have agreed on the committee chairmen for nearly all of the committees, and these four individuals will be chairing those committees. Datuk Seri Lee Chong Wei, for example, is on the Performance Committee," he told reporters after chairing the BAM Council meeting yesterday.

Tengku Zafrul added that BAM has also restructured its existing committees, streamlining them from 14 to 10 in line with the Tangkis 2030 strategic plan.

"Out of the 10 committees, we have agreed to appoint nine chairmen. All of them are council members. Apart from that, we will also invite external experts based on their experience, passion and expertise in badminton," he said, while confirming that he will not be chairing any committee.

Meanwhile, he said yesterday's BAM Council meeting had formally and officially adopted the *Tangkis 2030*, which was initially presented in August, as the official plan for BAM moving forward.

He also emphasised that the *Tangkis 2030* is not just a BAM plan but one for the entire badminton community in Malaysia.

"It is important to note that BAM can only play an effective role if it is in a strong financial position. Therefore, the expansion of investment and commercial efforts will be the main focus of BAM to ensure the success of this plan," he said.

In the meantime, Lee said his main priority as chairman of the Performance Committee will be to work closely with all coaches to help improve the performance of the national athletes.

"I will work hard with the coaches to see how we can help the athletes perform better," said the former world No. 1 men's singles player. – Bernama

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