



King Charles strips Andrew of titles and mansion
 Buckingham Palace seeks to distance royals from former Duke of York over links to Jeffrey Epstein scandal.

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Mother of Zayn Rayyan jailed 5 years

Court delivers guilty verdict after finding woman had been negligent in allowing autistic son to walk behind her without proper supervision, which ultimately led to his disappearance.



Ismanira Abdul Manaf, the mother of the deceased boy, arriving at the Petaling Jaya Courts Complex yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

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Concerns over acute shortage of counsellors in schools
 Difficult for one therapist overseeing up to 500 students to have sufficient time to provide emotional space for those in need of support, says expert.

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560,000 PwD, single mothers and elderly receive RM2 billion aid
 Initiatives help recipients ease financial burden and sustain livelihood, with objective of eventually facilitating independent living.

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Anwar being welcomed by South Korean President Lee Jae-Myung ahead of the Apec Economic Leaders' Meeting. – BERNAMAPIC

Malaysia, US boost defence cooperation with new MoU

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia and the United States (US) have solidified over 40 years of bilateral defence ties through the signing of a new MoU on defence cooperation aimed at enhancing collaboration on regional peace, security and prosperity.

The agreement was reached during a bilateral meeting between Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin and US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth on the sidelines of the Asean Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus on Thursday.

In a joint media statement issued yesterday, both leaders announced the renewal of an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement and reaffirmed their commitment to finalising bilateral agreements on communications, information sharing and geospatial matters.

"The secretary and minister recognise the strength of defence cooperation between the US and Malaysia as a fundamental pillar of the US-Malaysia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership."

They also reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining maritime security in the South China Sea, agreeing that it is a vital corridor where respect for sovereignty is imperative, Bernama reported.

The statement also noted Mohamed Khaled's concerns over specific regional threats.

"The minister said grey-zone tactics such as hydrographic research conducted under the protection of foreign coast guard vessels threaten sovereignty and are a clear provocation and threat."

Both leaders reiterated the importance of communication and dialogue to prevent military miscalculation, while also pursuing modernisation and interoperability to ensure military readiness.

'Asean must be ready to address non-traditional threats'

KUALA LUMPUR: The Asean Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) must evolve beyond traditional military cooperation to address emerging and non-traditional threats that transcend borders and dimensions, said Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin.

He said modern-day security challenges such as cyberattacks, misinformation and digital manipulation now pose as great a danger as territorial disputes, requiring Asean to adopt technological foresight, cybersecurity collaboration and shared innovation.

"Whether on land, at sea or in cyberspace, we cannot afford to ignore any front of our security anymore."

"Powerful non-state actors wield technology as a weapon to disrupt societies, topple governments and undermine critical infrastructure through cyberattacks, misinformation and digital manipulation."

"If we fail to invest against these threats, we fail to secure our future," he said yesterday at the 19th ADMM which was attended by Asean defence ministers and Asean Secretary-General Dr Kao Kim Hourn.

Mohamed Khaled said Asean's growing convening power demonstrates the international community's trust and confidence in the bloc's neutral and inclusive approach to regional security.

He said Asean's two enduring strengths – its internal unity and external openness – have enabled it to remain a credible, reliable and neutral host for the regional security agenda.

He expressed his appreciation to Thailand and Cambodia for entrusting Malaysia to help facilitate and expedite the peaceful resolution of their border dispute. – Bernama

Anwar urges Apec to narrow North-South divide

► 'Platform should be bridge between not only Asia-Pacific economies but also Latin American and African regions'

GYEONGJU (South Korea): Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has called on the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) economies to serve as a bridge beyond the platform with greater participation from Latin American and African economies.

He said this would enable Apec's agenda to be translated into something more substantially transformative, inclusive and truly impactful.

Speaking at the Apec Economic Leaders' Dialogue with Guests here, Anwar said this could be achieved through formal or informal engagements between these countries and Apec member economies.

"Apec should serve as a bridge not only for the Asia-Pacific economies but also in expanding engagement with the Latin American and African regions towards a more

just and balanced global economic order between developed and developing nations.

"This could also set the trajectory towards a more equitable economic architecture that narrows the gap between the Global North and the Global South."

He pointed out that in the past the platform had proven itself as a trailblazer and has been catalytic in shaping global economic norms, Bernama reported.

"Apec pioneered the spirit behind plurilateral arrangements which were later adopted by the World Trade Organisation, incubated the early frameworks for trade facilitation and led by example in voluntarily lowering tariffs for environmental goods."

"That is why Apec's gentle yet persuasive approach, its ethos of persuasion rather than imposition, may well be what the world

needs today."

Anwar added that Apec, which includes 21 economies, is currently nurturing new ideas that address the challenges shaping their collective future.

"These include green growth and sustainable finance, digital transformation and equal access to technology, resilient supply chains and critical minerals as well as food security, smart agriculture and clean energy transitions."

"These themes resonate deeply with Malaysia's own aspirations under the Madani Economy framework – to build a resilient, inclusive and sustainable economy that works for all."

Anwar said the current global transformation requires a whole-of-society approach to bring about real and value-added change.

"The future will belong to regions that can foster collaboration among governments, industries, academia and communities. Collaborative governance is not about sharing power. It is about sharing purpose."

Efforts to bolster ties with America to continue

GYEONGJU: Malaysia will continue to strengthen its strategic ties with the United States (US) on the principles of openness, equitability and mutual respect to ensure regional and global stability, prosperity and peace, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

In a statement after his bilateral meeting with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent here, Anwar said Bessent expressed his appreciation to Malaysia for the warm hospitality extended to US President Donald Trump and the US delegation during their recent visit to Kuala Lumpur.

"Our meeting today continued the positive momentum of the close ties forged during the 47th Asean Summit, and it provided an opportunity to discuss various aspects of trade and financial relations between Malaysia and the US."

"Focus was also given to strengthening bilateral economic linkages, including the shared commitment between the US Treasury and Bank Negara Malaysia to ensure a resilient foreign exchange policy framework, financial market stability and transparent and accountable governance," said Anwar.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of

the Apec Economic Leaders' Meeting yesterday.

Anwar also reiterated his appreciation to Trump for his visit, which he said reflected the US administration's strong commitment to fostering a constructive and mutually respectful as well as beneficial bilateral relationship.

"I appreciate his role and contribution in strengthening global economic cooperation as well as efforts to expand inclusive investment, trade and peace networks, based on dialogue, fairness and mutual understanding." – Bernama

Approve Employees' Social Security Bill swiftly: MTUC

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) has urged that the Employees' Social Security (Amendment) Bill 2025, which seeks to expand social security protection to employees involved in non-work related accidents outside office hours, be passed without delay.

MTUC president Datuk Abdul Halim Mansor called for the Bill, tabled for first reading in the Dewan Rakyat on Thursday, to be passed without bureaucratic hurdles.

He also urged the government to recognise it as a fundamental right of workers rather than an option or additional benefit.

"MTUC also urges the government to set an official enforcement date and introduce a simple registration mechanism to ensure no eligible worker is left out.

"At the same time, bureaucratic issues must be minimised and the claims process should be transparent, swift and prioritise workers' interests," he said.

Abdul Halim added that the initiative by the Human Resources Ministry is a significant step forward in strengthening the country's social protection network.

"The tabling of the Bill was the result of MTUC's decade-long advocacy efforts, proving that the collective demands of trade unions have gained the government's attention.

Abdul Halim said MTUC has agreed to engage in discussions to determine its implementation and the best contribution mechanism, taking into account the shared interests of Socso and workers.

He said MTUC is committed to working closely with the ministry, Socso and all stakeholders to ensure that every worker receives 24-hour protection. — Bernama

Tambun PAS leader Mat Salleh Said dies

IPOH: Tambun PAS leader Mat Salleh Said died at the Raja Permaisuri Bainun Hospital at 10.30pm on Thursday.

His death was conveyed by the division secretary via a post on the PAS Kawasan Tambun Facebook page.

"He was not just a leader, but a *murabbi*, a guide and a source of strength for all of us. May Allah SWT bless his soul, accept all his deeds of *jiha*d and sacrifices in this Islamic struggle. *Al-Fatihah* for the late Ustaz Mat Salleh Said," read the post.

It said his remains were taken to Surau Al-Jamayah Taman Hiburan in Hulu Kinta at 11am yesterday for funeral prayers and then buried at the Pekan Tambun Cemetery. — Bernama

Dire need for more counsellors in schools

➤ Although no global ratio exists, recognised benchmark for effective emotional support is one professional for every 250 students

■ BY FAIZ RUZMAN
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Many Malaysian schools have one counsellor for 400 to 500 students, raising concerns about the quality and accessibility of mental health support for students.

The commonly recognised benchmark for effective school-based emotional support is one counsellor for every 250 students.

Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

registered counsellor Dr Farhana Sabri said while there is no universal global ratio, the 1:250 guideline is widely used in professional counselling frameworks, including those recommended by the American School Counsellor Association.

"If we look at practices in developed countries like the United States, they maintain a ratio of 1 counsellor to 376 students due to resource limitations.

"But in Malaysia, the reality is that many school counsellors are each responsible for 400 to 500 students.

"In such conditions, it becomes very difficult for a counsellor to truly provide enough time and emotional space for every student," she told *theSun*.

Malaysia currently has about 12,000 registered counsellors nationwide, according to data from the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry.

Farhana said this is not enough if the goal is to embed counselling support meaningfully in all schools.

"If we are serious about student emotional wellbeing, we need about 24,000 counsellors, and they need to be full-time and registered counsellors, not counsellors who are

also handling administrative or disciplinary work."

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) psychologist Prof Dr Siti Aisyah Panatik agreed that 24,000 counsellors are needed for schools.

"When a counsellor is responsible for too many students, the support becomes superficial. Counselling requires continuity and rapport. Without time, meaningful emotional work cannot happen."

Siti Aisyah said the practice of assigning administrative duties to counsellors further reduces the time available for providing emotional support.

"Workload and bureaucracy hinder the capacity of counsellors to build meaningful, trusting relationships with students, provide continuous, individualised care and implement preventive mental health programmes effectively.

"To restore the balance, Malaysia must reclaim the professional identity of the counsellor as a psychological helper, not a paperwork handler.

"Only then can schools evolve into truly supportive environments that nurture the emotional resilience and holistic wellbeing of students."

On the preference of students for external counsellor services, UTM psychology officer Dr Zulfikar Ahmad said the emotional environment at home is one of the key factors to influence whether students seek help in school.

"They are afraid what they say will be reported, judged or held against them. This concern is stronger in cases involving bullying, harassment, sexual behaviour or family conflict. Students worry that their situation will not remain private.

"When confidentiality is not clearly understood, students assume that whatever they share will spread. That perception alone is enough to stop them from seeking help.

"If emotional expression is never encouraged at home, counselling will feel unfamiliar and uncomfortable.

"A student who has not learned how to talk about feelings will not know how to begin in a school setting."

On Thursday, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri said the 12,583 registered counsellors in the country are insufficient to meet rising mental health needs.

She added that many students now feel more comfortable confiding in external counsellors due to fear of disciplinary repercussions in school.

Nancy also said the National Counselling Service Plan 2025-2035, currently being drafted, would strengthen standards.



Siti Aisyah said when a counsellor is responsible for too many students, the support becomes superficial. —BERNAMAPIC

Qualities required of mental health therapists

KUALA LUMPUR: Counsellors must prioritise their own physical and spiritual wellbeing as well as emotional stability before helping clients achieve a balanced and fulfilling life, said Board of Counsellors Malaysia president Datin Dr Ruhani Mat Min.

She said in the digital era, counsellors need to possess positive attitudes and personalities as well as relevant knowledge and skills to enhance their professional competency.

"A 2025 study found that the two main elements of counsellor competency are attitude and personality, while knowledge and skills complement the effectiveness of

counselling services.

"We cannot help others if we do not help ourselves. How can we guide our clients towards improvement if we are not in a good state ourselves?"

She was speaking at the closing ceremony of the National Counselling Month celebration on Thursday. The event was officiated by Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri.

Ruhani said counselling supervision provides checks and balances to ensure a counsellor's emotional wellbeing, which in turn ensures the effectiveness of interventions for clients.

She said supervision practices must be extended to certified

counsellors and not be limited to university students, as the process can help strengthen emotional resilience, ethics and professionalism among counsellors.

Ruhani said the advancement of communication technology requires counsellors to be more aware of client data security, digital literacy gaps and information authenticity as borderless social networks expose them to risks of data breaches and misrepresentation of professional identity.

She said data from the 2023 National Health and Welfare Survey revealed that about one million Malaysians, or 4.6% of those aged 16 and above, suffer from depression,

with the youth group (aged 16-29) being the most affected due to the rise in bullying, rape and violence in schools.

"This situation demands that counsellors play a greater role in strengthening counselling services not only for clients but also for themselves."

She encouraged counsellors to use social media platforms to spread positive emotions, build networks and strengthen human connections, while stressing that physical interaction remains vital for maintaining honesty and empathy.

"Use digital spaces creatively but never neglect face-to-face interactions." — Bernama



PwD, single mothers and elderly receive **RM2b** in aid

➤ Initiatives help vulnerable groups sustain livelihood and ease financial burden, enabling independent living, says ministry

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Over 560,000 Malaysians have received aid worth RM2.03 billion from the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry as of August 2025.

The assistance benefited persons with disabilities (PwD), senior citizens living alone and single mothers struggling with financial and caregiving challenges.

In a written reply to the parliament website yesterday, the ministry said the aid was distributed through the Social Welfare Department to help recipients sustain their livelihoods and ease their financial burden, with the goal of enabling them to eventually live independently.

"Several targeted initiatives are being

implemented, including monthly financial aid under schemes such as the Children's Assistance, Senior Citizens Assistance, Allowance for Disabled Workers and Assistance for the Care of PwDs or Bedridden Chronic Patients," it said.

The ministry has also enhanced its Two-Year Exit Programme to empower recipients to become self-reliant through entrepreneurship with the capital assistance under this programme increasing to RM5,000 to help participants generate sustainable income.

"Additionally, the Home Help Services Programme mobilises community members and volunteers to care for and protect senior citizens and persons with disabilities living alone.

"The welfare department also operates institutions to provide care and protection for children, the elderly and PwD, while community-based initiatives such as the Senior Citizens Activity Centre and Community-Based Rehabilitation Centre promote active ageing and social inclusion."

The ministry said the government remains committed to helping vulnerable groups sustain their livelihoods and achieve self-reliance through various support programmes.

The ministry is also developing a National Care Economy Framework to recognise and empower the care sector as a key catalyst for

inclusive and sustainable development in the country.

It said the initiative is in line with the Asean Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, by emphasising close relationship between environmental care, wellbeing and sustainability.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry is ramping up rehabilitation services and upgrading facilities with advanced technology to support Malaysia's ageing population, which is expected to surpass 15% by 2036.

The ministry said the move aims to help senior citizens stay healthy, independent and supported by a sustainable healthcare system.

"Currently, 1,103 health clinics nationwide offer free basic rehabilitation for Malaysians, including early detection of physical or cognitive decline and intervention programmes such as therapeutic exercises, fall prevention, and caregiver training.

"These services are provided by 1,053 rehabilitation professionals, comprising physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech therapists," it said in a written reply.

For complex cases, patients are referred to hospitals offering specialised programmes like stroke, cardiac, pulmonary and elderly rehabilitation, supported by 2,866 trained professionals.

Positive feedback for Urban Renewal Bill

PUTRAJAYA: The Urban Renewal Bill has received positive feedback from various stakeholders, according to the Town and Country Planning Department (PLANMalaysia).

It said the encouraging response was recorded throughout the three-day national-level World Town Planning Day and the National Planning Congress 2025, which concluded on Thursday.

The support came from professional bodies, academics, higher education institutions, residents' committees, local authorities, government agencies and organisations involved in urban renewal during a knowledge-sharing session titled Transforming Our Cities for a Better Urban Future.

The engagement session, attended by over 500 participants, discussed urban renewal based on the current legal framework and concluded that a new legislative framework should be established to guide agencies and stakeholders in implementing urban renewal initiatives.

"PLANMalaysia remains open to receiving input from all parties to further strengthen the content of the Bill before it is tabled in Parliament," it said in a statement.

According to PLANMalaysia, the implementation of urban renewal will pave the way for more strategic collaborations with various stakeholders in carrying out development agendas, in line with the establishment of a new, more comprehensive, and effective legal framework. – Bernama

Tour guides to attend service improvement courses

KUALA LUMPUR: Every tour guide in the country will be required to undergo special training offered by Tourism Malaysia in an effort to improve the quality of services to tourists.

Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing said the training and courses would be implemented in collaboration with language centres and tourism training centres to improve the ability of tour guides to master several languages.

"This programme will be implemented nationwide, including Sabah and Sarawak, to ensure that tourists receive the best service," he said when winding up the debate on the policy-level Supply (Budget) Bill 2026 for the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry in Dewan Rakyat on Thursday.

Tiong said the ministry is also in discussions with the Finance Ministry regarding the implementation of a special tax relief of up to RM1,000 to be extended to sectors involved in tourism and business services.

Meanwhile, Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh, while wrapping up the Budget 2026 policy debate for her ministry, said the welfare and social security of the country's athletes would be strengthened through the expansion of protection contributions and post-retirement career transition plans, in line with the Madani Malaysia agenda.

Yeoh said starting from 2024, the government had restructured the athlete training contracts under the Podium Programme by focusing on the monthly contributions of Employees Provident Fund (EPF) and the Social Security Organisation (Socso).

"For the year 2025, a total of RM1,677,603 (employer contributions of 12% or 13% based on salary rates) had been contributed to the EPF and Socso for 370 athletes under the Podium Programme," she said.

She added that the move strengthens social security for athletes in addition to the national

athlete welfare scheme that has been in place since 1998, which includes medical treatment assistance, death benefits and group accident insurance coverage.

In an effort to ensure career continuity after retirement, Yeoh said the National Sports Council, through the Malaysian Athlete Career and Education secretariat, is implementing career guidance and athlete transition programmes with government-linked companies and higher learning institutions that provide flexible pathways for athletes to further their education.

Meanwhile, during the winding up session of the 2026 Budget policy debate for the Defence Ministry, its Deputy Minister Adly Zahari said the procurement of four Ground Master 400 Alpha (GM400a) long-range radars and three Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) ANKA Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) aircraft was carried out through an international open tender to ensure transparency and technology transfer to the country.

As for the delivering of the GM400 radars, he said each is expected to be in July next year in Sarawak, May 2027 in Kelantan and Johor and April 2028 in Sabah, while the three MALE ANKA UAS are expected to be delivered in early February next year.

On the wellbeing of Malaysian Armed Forces veterans, Adly stressed the ministry's commitment to empowering the group through technical and vocational education and training programmes as well as career placements with industry collaboration, including placing 10 veterans in China for the operation of the East Coast Rail Link project.

As for the welfare of personnel, studies on allowance and incentive schemes are being conducted, especially involving high-risk personnel such as special forces and personnel of Royal Malaysian Navy. – Bernama



Tiong said the programme will be implemented nationwide, including Sabah and Sarawak, to ensure tourists receive the best service. – MASRY CHE ANI/THE SUN

Woman gets five years' jail for neglecting autistic son

➤ Court also orders mother of deceased child to perform 120 hours of community service after serving sentence

PETALING JAYA: The Sessions Court yesterday found the mother of Zayn Rayyan Abdul Matin guilty of neglecting her six-year-old autistic child, resulting in physical injury to the boy two years ago, and sentenced her to five years in prison.

Judge Dr Syahliza Warnoh meted out the sentence on Ismanira Abdul Manaf, 30, after finding that the defence had failed to raise reasonable doubt on the case.

The woman was ordered to begin serving her prison sentence beginning yesterday.

She was also placed on a two-year good behaviour bond with a local guarantor and a security deposit of RM3,000.

The judge further ordered that she perform 120 hours of community service, to be completed within six months following the completion of her prison term.

On July 21, Syahliza ordered Ismanira to enter her defence after ruling that the prosecution had successfully established a *prima facie* case against her.

However, her husband Zaim Ikhwan Zahari, 30, was acquitted and discharged of the same charge.

The couple had been charged with neglecting Zayn Rayyan in a manner likely to cause him physical injury in the vicinity of Block R, Idaman Apartments in Damansara

Damai and a nearby stream, between noon on Dec 5, 2023 and 9.55pm the following day.

They were charged under Section 31(1)(a) of the Child Act 2001, read together with Section 34 of the Penal Code, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years' imprisonment, a fine of RM50,000, or both.

In her judgment, Syahliza said the Child Act 2021 does not provide for an interpretation or definition of the word "neglect" under Section 31(1)(a).

She said the court was not bound by any interpretation or psychological perspective of an organisation or charge in determining whether an accused person's action constitutes neglect, as such it must be based on the facts and evidence presented in the case.

"After hearing the testimonies of both the defence and prosecution witnesses, along with the submitted exhibits, and after considering the submissions of both parties, the court finds that the defence has failed to raise any reasonable doubt in this case.

"The court therefore rules that the prosecution has proven its case beyond a reasonable doubt against the accused. Accordingly, the accused is found guilty as charged," said the judge.

Syahliza said the defence argued that the

accused did not neglect the boy during the incident, as it was his routine to walk behind his mother, and this behaviour was described as fixed and unchangeable.

However, the court found that this defence was inconsistent with the testimony of the accused herself and the fourth defence witness, Umi Syafiqah Rohizal.

Syahliza said the court also found that walking behind the accused was not a rigid or unchangeable routine for the deceased.

"As for the defence's claim that the accused had supervised the deceased, the court found that on the day of the incident, the accused had allowed the deceased to walk behind her without proper supervision, which ultimately led to his disappearance," the judge said.

She added that the evidence of the fifth defence witness Dr Noor Aisyah Rosli was also deemed to be opinion-based and inconclusive, as the assessment of the deceased's behaviour had been made solely from information provided by the accused, Bernama reported.

During mitigation, lawyer Haresh Mahadevan appealed for his client to be fined instead of imprisoned, citing that the woman has another special-needs child with autism who requires her love and care.

"Throughout this case, my client has fully cooperated with police. One fact that the court should take into account is that none of the witnesses stated that the accused did not love the late Zayn Rayyan. In fact, all witnesses described her as a loving person," said Haresh.

Report: Lorry in fatal crash overloaded

BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Overloading by more than 70% caused a gravel-laden tipper lorry to lose control and crash into a Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) convoy in Teluk Intan last May, investigations have revealed.

In a statement yesterday, the Transport Ministry said the lorry had exceeded the permitted Gross Vehicle Weight limit, leading to the fatal collision along Jalan Chikus-Sungai Lampam.

The Final Report of the Special Task Force on Road Transport Safety Investigation found no mechanical failures in the braking or steering systems of the vehicle.

"Instead, the incident stemmed from operational and compliance weaknesses, including poor internal supervision by the lorry operator and the absence of a functioning GPS monitoring system."

The ministry added that the investigation was not intended to assign blame or liability but to strengthen land transport safety policies and prevent similar tragedies.

The full report is available to the public on the ministry website (www.mot.gov.my).

The crash occurred at about 8.50am on May 13 when the lorry collided into a truck carrying 18 FRU personnel returning to Ipoh from an assignment in Teluk Intan.

Nine FRU personnel were killed, two were seriously injured and seven others sustained minor injuries.

Those killed were Sgt Perumal Sugunanathan, 44, from Lahat, Ipoh; Sgt Mohd Roslan Abd Rahim, 46, from Tanjung Rambutan, Ipoh; Cpl Mohd Pozli Jaudin, 41, from Gunung Rapat, Ipoh; Cpl Nurit Pandak, 34, from Kampar; and Cpl Amiruddin Zabri, 38, from Gopeng.

Also killed were Cpl Mohamad Hilmi Mohd Azlan, 38, from Taiping; Cpl Muhamad Akmal Muhamad, 35, from Kuala Kurau; L'Cpl Damarrulan Abdul Latif, 33, from Ipoh; and Const Akmal Wafi Annuar, 28, from Lunas, Kedah.

Logging worker killed in elephant attack

GUA MUSANG: A 43-year-old local man was found dead after being attacked by a herd of wild elephants near a logging workers quarters in Aring 8 on Wednesday night.

In a statement yesterday, Gua Musang police chief Supt Sik Choon Foo said police received an initial report on the incident from the Paloh 2 police station at 8.15 am on Thursday.

He said preliminary investigations found that six logging workers, including the victim Saidi Jahari, were asleep in the quarters when they were startled by loud noises.

"They saw a herd of wild elephants approaching and ran into the forest to escape. Unfortunately, the victim could not get away and was attacked by one of the elephants," he said.

Sik said the workers returned to the quarters a few hours later and found the victim with serious injuries, including fractures to both legs, and carried him inside. However, they were forced to leave him behind when an elephant, believed to be the herd's leader, returned to the area.

Sik said the body was sent to Gua Musang Hospital for a post-mortem, and the case has been classified as a sudden death.

Meanwhile, the victim's brother, Sulaiman Jahari, 32, said they learned of the incident at 10am on Thursday.

He added that Saidi had only started working in the logging area about two weeks ago.

"The incident is a huge shock to our family," - Bernama



Noor Hisam (second from left) with his officers showing the seized drugs at the press conference yesterday. - **BERNAMAPIC**

Police arrest couple, seize over RM2.8m drugs

IPOH: Police have arrested a married couple suspected of being involved in drug trafficking and seized narcotics worth RM2.87 million in Taiping on Wednesday.

Perak police chief Datuk Noor Hisam Nordin said the 39-year-old local man was arrested by the roadside in Pokok Assam at 5.15pm, while the 26-year-old woman was detained at a house in Taman Assamara later the same day.

"Police seized six transparent packets containing drugs believed to be methamphetamine, weighing 5.06kg, along with a liquid substance suspected to be narcotics, with an estimated volume of

84.75 litres.

"Two vehicles worth an estimated RM100,000, were also seized," he said at a press conference held at the Perak police contingent headquarters yesterday.

Noor Hisam said police also confiscated equipment and chemicals allegedly used to refine low-quality methamphetamine for resale.

He added that the couple is believed to have been involved in drug trafficking activities since August, adding that the seized drugs were intended for distribution outside Perak, with an estimated capacity to produce

more than 51,000 doses.

Noor Hisam said only the male suspect tested positive for methamphetamine and has a record of drug and criminal offences.

The couple has been remanded for seven days from Wednesday to assist in the investigation under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952.

"This success is the result of continuous intelligence efforts and cooperation from the public.

"We will not tolerate anyone involved in drug trafficking, processing or abetting drug-related activities," he added. - Bernama



Shaik Abdullah said the programme currently supports 33 Palestinian families. – AFP/IC

Fundraising drive for families in Gaza

➤ Move aims to assist households on education, healthcare and rebuilding homes

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Islamic Council is running a fundraising project at mosques across the state to assist families in Gaza.

Its president Datuk Dr Mohamad Abdul Hamid said Penang was the pioneer for the project, which is being implemented by the council in collaboration with the Muslim Organisation Consultative Council of Malaysia (Mapim) and the Nurul Islam Foundation.

"In 2023 and 2024, we launched a fund and the state government also contributed. We sent all the collections, which amounted to more than RM1 million, to Gaza in early 2024 through the Prime Minister's Department and after that, we launched a fund for orphans in Gaza.

"This year, in collaboration with the Nurul Islam Foundation and Mapim, we launched a fundraising project at 245 mosques to help 'adopt' families in Gaza. We will also discuss conducting a special collection to build a mosque in Gaza because many have been destroyed," he said during an event at Al-Bukhary Mosque on Thursday.

The event was also attended by the Penang Mufti Assoc Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Sukki Othman, Nurul Islam Foundation chairman Assoc Prof Dr Shaik Abdullah Hassan and Mapim chairman Mohd Azmi Abdul Hamid.

Shaik Abdullah said the funds will be used to support the selected families in Gaza for education,

health, tents and rebuilding their destroyed homes.

He added that the project is being carried out at mosques in Penang as a pioneer project before it is expanded to other states in the future, and mosques were chosen due to their location as focal points for the Muslim community, Bernama reported.

"We will place QR codes at the mosques for the public to contribute. Phase one of the Gaza adopted family programme began last Ramadan.

"We are supporting 33 adopted families there by channeling a donation of RM500 to each family and *Alhamdulillah*, it has been implemented for a year with the cooperation and support provided by Mapim," he said.

Despite facing various challenges in sending financial aid, he said the contributions were successfully delivered through cooperation with Mapim, which has representatives in Gaza.

Silent war on AIDS threat

KUALA LUMPUR: When most people are winding down at home after a nine-hour workday, Muhammad Fitri Abu Bakar is just beginning his "shift".

As dusk falls, he walks through alleyways behind buildings or low-cost flats to fulfil a duty that does not follow office hours.

"No, I'm not a doctor. I'm a community health worker (CHW) and my 'patients' are people living with HIV/AIDS," said the soft-spoken man in his early 30s when met by Bernama recently.

The existence of CHWs like Muhammad Fitri remains largely unknown to the public.

They work with people at the fringes of society, many living with HIV/AIDS in silence, away from the gaze and stigma of the community.

Muhammad Fitri is one of seven CHWs serving under the Kuala Lumpur AIDS Support Services Society.

Their responsibilities include conducting outreach programmes and distributing medications such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, an antiretroviral drug taken by HIV-negative individuals at high risk, and Antiretroviral Therapy, a daily oral treatment for HIV patients.

Health Ministry data shows 3,185 new HIV cases recorded in 2024, nearly half the number reported the previous year.

Among these, young men aged 20 to 30 account for three-quarters of cases and 90% were infected through same-sex transmission.

Reaching this group is not easy. Many are reluctant to seek help, fearing exposure or discrimination.

"That's where we come in, building trust so they feel safe enough to reach out. Although government clinics are always open to them, many still hesitate to go, afraid of being judged or recognised," said Muhammad Fitri.

As key stakeholders in the national HIV response, the Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF) and the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) continue to play a strategic role in empowering CHWs as agents of social change.

According to MAC deputy president Nur Afiqah Mohd Salleh, CHWs serve as "the gatekeepers to a fairer, more compassionate healthcare system," especially for groups historically marginalised from mainstream services.

She cited the Differentiated HIV Services for Key Populations (DHSKP) model launched in 2019, a joint initiative by the ministry and MAC, which expanded the role of CHWs significantly.

At its core, DHSKP is a central module within the KK Model 2.0 Initiative, designed around the concept of a community-friendly clinic.

It integrates CHWs and civil society organisations directly into the public healthcare system, focusing on key populations at risk such as men who have sex with men and transgender women to ensure more inclusive and responsive HIV services.

"The impact has been remarkable. Among injecting drug users, HIV infection rates have dropped from over 22% in 2009 to below 8% in recent years.

"The Harm Reduction Programme, supported by CHWs through safe needle exchanges and methadone therapy, has saved thousands of lives," said Nur Afiqah.

To ensure that healthcare reaches beyond urban centres, Nur Afiqah said MAF launched the Sabah and Sarawak Health Access Programme (SHAPE) to serve patients in remote and rural areas of East Malaysia.

Starting in Kuching, SHAPE has since expanded to Miri and will soon reach Bintulu.

The initiative provides travel subsidies, free testing and temporary accommodation at transit centres such as Teratak Kasih Tok Nan in Kuching, another example of a human-centred approach that restores dignity to care.

In Sabah, the programme has grown from its initial base in Sandakan to Kota Kinabalu, marking a crucial step in ensuring that geography is no longer a barrier to treatment or hope. – Bernama

EDUCATION

FOCUS 2025

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Rini Aswanda Jukilin, fourth-place winner of the 2025 Sabah Kaamatan Unduk Ngadau, placing a crown on little Savenna.

'Dazanak' ethnic fashion show celebrates spirit of youth

BY JOSHUA CHANG
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

KOTA KINABALU: The 2025 Dazanak Ethnic Fashion Show, organised by Junior Chamber International (JCI) Sandakan on October 18, brilliantly showcased Sabah's cultural heritage through its younger generation.

Held at the SMJK Tiong Hua hall, the event was part of the JCI Sandakan's "Little Hong Kong Food Festival 3.0."

The Kadazan word "dazanak" refers to children. The spotlight was thus on 16 children, aged six to 12, who participated in the contest.

The show aimed to promote *dazanak* ethnic culture through fashion, ensuring it is preserved as a living heritage for Sabah's youngsters.

It also provided a creative platform for self-expression, fostering pride in Sabah's diverse traditions and encouraging active youth participation in native arts and culture.

The evening was further enlivened thanks to performances by Kimberly Myra Terence, the 2025 Sabah Kaamatan Sugandoi champion, and singer Are-Wien (Edwin Ahmad) from Beluran.

The organisers extended their appreciation to the KDCA Sandakan Women's Council for steadfast support of the programme.

Nurizzah Azzalea Muhammad Amar A.J., 11, from Menggatal won first place for her outfit themed "Princess of Borneo", designed by Veonmay Teo.

Nurizzah won RM700 and a trophy. She was also presented with a crown, sash, bouquet and certificate.

In second place, Nur Natasya Aiman Dania, also 11, from Sandakan earned praise for her outfit "Princess Gosing of Labuk Beluran" also designed by Teo. She won RM500, a trophy and a certificate.

The third spot went to Nur Faiqah Aimie Mohd Fauzi, 9, from Sandakan for her attire "Beautiful Modern of Bajau Sama" designed by Madzlyn MJ. She was given RM 300, a trophy and a certificate.

The People's Choice Award for Most Popular Dress 2025 was earned by Savenna Scarlet Lynne Emri, 6, of Sandakan.

The Most Popular Model 2025 went to Ayeen Qhase Qistina, 9, also of Sandakan.

Savenna and Ayeen were presented with RM200, a crown, sash, trophy and bouquet each.

Lively public support for Spastic Fun Run in PJ

► Funds raised to upgrade facilities, expand training and support building project

PETALING JAYA: The 30th edition of the Spastic Fun Run 2025 was held last Sunday morning at Dataran PJ here with the meaningful theme "Your Contribution = Their Hope" to advocate compassion, inclusion and acceptance within society.

Organised by the Spastic Children's Association of Selangor & Federal Territory (SCASFT) in collaboration with several NGOs, the event attracted over 3,000 participants, including members of the general public and persons with disabilities, rallying support to raise funds and awareness for the underprivileged.

The funds will go towards upgrading physiotherapy facilities, expanding special education and vocational training programmes, and contributing to the new building development fund to enhance long-term care for children with cerebral palsy.

The flag-off was jointly officiated by the director of the Department of Persons with Disabilities (JPOKU) within the Social Welfare Department Pathmanathan R. Nalassamy, Selangor Women's Development and Social Welfare Executive Councillor Anfaal Saari, Petaling Jaya MP Lee Chean Chung, and PJ Mayor Mohamad Zahri Samingon.

The four also joined representatives of the disabled community, walking and pushing wheelchairs alongside for a 2km unity walk, demonstrating strong support for children with cerebral palsy and persons with disabilities.

The event featured a 5km Fun Run and 10km Competitive Run, encouraging public participation through varying formats.

The atmosphere was lively throughout the morning with RM40,000 worth of prizes including for lucky draws, Zumba warm-up



There was an enthusiastic and convivial atmosphere at both the fun and competitive runs.

sessions, community exhibition booths, and a food truck zone with snacks and drinks.

SCASFT also received four mock cheques, contributed by generous sponsors in support of its operational needs.

The centre's monthly operations is about RM170,000 and it receives most of this from generous donations from the public and companies.

"Over the past 30 years, this event has not only been a fundraising platform, but a true reflection of national inclusivity," said organising chairman Datuk Jerry Ching.

"Walking the 2km route alongside the differently-abled allows participants to experience their daily challenges, and inspires a deeper sense of empathy and responsibility."

Meanwhile, Pathmanathan urged the public and private sectors to provide more learning and development opportunities for children with special needs so they can gain skills and confidently integrate into society.

"SCASFT has been consistently committed to rehabilitation and education for these children — and deserves continued attention and support from all walks of life," he said.

Established in 1960, the association organised the first Walk-Jog-Wheel-A-Thon in 1994.

The run this year was also participated by various welfare-based NGOs who obtained exposure and raised funds for their own organisations, managing to collect about RM130,000.

Marking 15 years of empowering breast cancer survivors

BY JOSHUA CHANG
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

KOTA KINABALU: The Sabah Kinabalu Pink Ribbon (SKPR) celebrated 15 years of advocacy and support for breast cancer survivors at a gala dinner, using the milestone to launch a drive for a new generation of volunteers to ensure its legacy continues.

Held at the Hakka Hall here, the event themed "Unbreakable in Pink: Celebrating Love, Life and Legacy" saw community leaders, survivors and medical partners gather to honour the organisation's journey.

SKPR president Christy Fe Salazar, a 17-year breast cancer survivor, reflected on the organisation's origins, which began as a small, courageous group of women.

"What started as a humble effort to raise awareness about breast cancer has now grown into a powerful movement of hope, strength and sisterhood," she said.

Christy described the theme, "Unbreakable in Pink", as deeply personal, symbolising a transformation "from fear to faith, and from surviving to thriving."

She outlined the three core values that have guided SKPR: love, which drives compassion; life, which provides strength; and legacy, the mission to empower others.

While the journey has faced challenges such as the recent pandemic, Christy affirmed that



Christy (4th right) and Rosmawati (5th right) cut the anniversary cake with with key figures from SKPR's past and present to signify support and dedication for breast cancer patients.

"SKPR's spirit remained unbreakable."

Looking forward, she emphasised the focus on sustainability to expand outreach and support across Sabah.

The event also served as a moment of gratitude. Christy paid tribute to founder Datin Lucilla Pang, past and present members, volunteers, medical partners and families who have supported the cause.

In a show of ongoing community support,

the Association of Private Practitioners Sabah donated RM10,000 to bolster SKPR's initiatives.

The gala was attended by guest of honour Datuk Rosmawati Lasuki, CEO of the Sabah International Convention Centre.

The celebration culminated with a cake-cutting ceremony led by Rosmawati, Christy, Lucilla and former SKPR presidents, marking a decade and a half of unwavering commitment to breast cancer survivors in Sabah.



King Charles strips Andrew of titles and mansion

Decision ranks among most dramatic moves against member of royal family in modern British history

LONDON: Britain's King Charles has stripped his younger brother Andrew (*pic*) of his title of prince and forced him out of his Windsor home, seeking to distance the royals from him over his links to the Jeffrey Epstein scandal, said Buckingham Palace on Thursday.

Andrew, 65, second son of the late Queen Elizabeth, has come under mounting pressure in recent years over his behaviour and ties to the late sex offender Epstein. Earlier this month, he was forced to stop using his title of Duke of York.

Charles has escalated his actions against Andrew by stripping him of all his titles, leaving him

to be known as Andrew Mountbatten Windsor.

Buckingham Palace said a formal notice has been served on Andrew to surrender the lease of his Royal Lodge mansion on the Windsor Estate, west of London, adding that he would move to alternative private accommodation on the Sandringham estate in eastern England.

The decision by Charles marks one of the most dramatic moves against a member of the royal family in modern British history.

"These censures are deemed necessary, notwithstanding the fact that he continues to deny the allegations against him," the palace said.

"Their Majesties wish to make clear that their thoughts and utmost sympathies have been, and will remain, with the victims and survivors of any and all forms of abuse."

Andrew was once regarded as a dashing naval officer and served in



the military during the Falklands War with Argentina in the early 1980s.

But he was forced to step down from a roving UK trade ambassador role in 2011 before quitting all royal duties in 2019, and then was stripped of his military links and royal patronages in 2022 amid allegations of sexual misconduct that he has denied.

That year, he settled a lawsuit brought by Virginia Giuffre, who died in April, which accused him of sexually abusing her when she was a teenager.

In her book, Giuffre said "entitled" Andrew believed it was his birthright to have sex with her.

A statement released by Giuffre's family members said her family would "continue Virginia's battle", and all abusers and abettors connected to Ghislaine Maxwell and Epstein need to be held to account.

Earlier this month, correspondence between Andrew and Epstein from 2011 revealed Andrew telling Epstein

that they should "keep in close touch" and would "play some more soon".

A palace source said while Andrew continues to deny the accusations against him, it is clear that there had been serious lapses of judgement.

The source said the decision was taken by Charles but he had the support of the wider family, including heir to the throne Prince William, 43.

The decision to force Andrew to move away from Windsor was also significant after newspapers reported that he had not paid rent on his 30-room mansion for two decades, after initially paying for renovations.

In a rare political intervention into the workings of the royal family, a British parliamentary committee on Wednesday questioned whether Andrew should still be living in the house.

Polls show that the royal family has been losing the support of younger generations for years.

Charles has acted to protect the institution, which experts say is the priority of any monarch. - Reuters

Trump urges scrapping vote threshold to end shutdown

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Thursday called for the "nuclear option" of scrapping the key 60-vote threshold required for the Senate to advance legislation, as Republicans face mounting pressure to end the US federal shutdown.

The move would get rid of a long-standing rule that enables 41 of the 100 senators to block any Bill from debate or vote, a procedural check on power relied on by both parties in the past.

The filibuster effectively forces Democrats and Republicans to find bipartisan solutions.

"It is time for Republicans to play their 'Trump Card' and go for what is called the nuclear option. Get rid of the filibuster and get rid of it now!"

"Now we are in power, and if we did what we should be doing, it would immediately end this ridiculous, country-destroying 'shutdown'," said Trump in a post.

The federal shutdown that began on Oct 1 has meant no paychecks for thousands of federal workers and a stop to basic government functions across the United States.

From grinding air traffic to a halt at some airports to preventing the release of federal GDP figures and unstaffed national parks, many basic government services have been affected.

Food stamps are rapidly becoming one of the most pressing points in the shutdown, with 42 million low-income Americans set to lose access to vital help with grocery bills starting today.

About 23.7 million Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme recipients live in states that voted for Trump in the last presidential election while 18 million recipients live in states and districts that voted Democrat.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that the shutdown could cost the economy up to US\$14 billion (RM58 billion).

It is unclear how removing a filibuster would work, if the threshold for votes would be lowered or certain Bills could be made immune or whether so-called talking filibusters could be revived, wherein senators must give long speeches to prevent advancement of business.

In his first term, Trump unsuccessfully pushed to end the filibuster. - AFP

Hurricane Melissa thrashes Caribbean, nearly 50 dead

SANTIAGO DE CUBA: The death toll from Hurricane Melissa rose on Thursday to nearly 50 people after the storm devastated Caribbean islands and was bearing down on Bermuda, officials said.

Flooding was expected to subside in the Bahamas, although high water could persist in Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti and neighboring Dominican Republic, the US National Hurricane Centre (NHC) said.

The storm, one of the most powerful ever recorded, was made four times more likely because of human-caused climate change, according to a study by Imperial College London.

Tropical storm conditions were occurring in Bermuda on Thursday and the island was under a hurricane warning, with maximum sustained winds of 155kph, the NHC said.

The government urged residents to take precautionary measures against the storm.

Mississa smashed into Jamaica and Cuba with enormous force.

"The confirmed death toll from Hurricane Melissa is at 19", including nine in Westmoreland and eight in St Elizabeth, both parishes in Jamaica's west, said Information Minister



Jamaican authorities said confirming reports of deaths is difficult as access to the hardest-hit areas is limited. - AFP/IC

Dana Morris Dixon.

Communications and transport access remains largely down in Jamaica and Cuba, and comprehensive assessment of the damage could take days.

In impoverished Haiti, the country's civil defence agency said on Thursday the death toll has risen to 30, with 20 injured and 20 missing.

In the east of the communist island

of Cuba, battling its worst economic crisis in decades, people struggled through inundated streets lined with flooded and collapsed homes.

Cuban authorities said about 735,000 people have been evacuated, mainly in the provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Holguin and Guantanamo.

The United States has mobilised disaster assistance response teams and urban search and rescue

personnel, and the teams were on the ground in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and the Bahamas, according to a State Department official.

Teams were en route to Haiti too.

The United Kingdom government announced £2.5 million (RM13.7 million) in emergency funding for the region and said it was chartering "limited" flights to help British nationals leave.

In Jamaica, United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator Dennis Zulu said Melissa has brought "tremendous, unprecedented devastation of infrastructure, property, roads, network connectivity".

Authorities there have said confirming reports of deaths is difficult as access to the hardest-hit areas is limited, and some people were still unable to reach family and loved ones.

Hurricane Melissa tied the 1935 record for the most intense storm ever to make landfall when it slammed Jamaica on Tuesday, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Such mega-storms "are a brutal reminder of the need to step up climate action on all fronts", said UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell. - AFP

Japan atomic bomb survivor groups protest US nuclear testing order

TOKYO: A Japanese atomic bomb survivors group that won the Nobel Peace Prize has strongly criticised US President Donald Trump's directive to begin nuclear weapons testing.

More than 200,000 people were killed when the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II, the only time nuclear weapons have been used during warfare.

Survivors have battled decades of physical and psychological trauma, as well as the stigma that often came with being a victim.

After Trump said on Thursday he had ordered the Pentagon to start nuclear weapons testing to equal China and Russia, Nobel laureate Nihon Hidankyo sent a letter of protest to the US embassy in Japan.

The directive "directly contradicts

the efforts by nations around the world striving for a peaceful world without nuclear weapons and is utterly unacceptable", the letter said.

The Nagasaki mayor also condemned Trump's order, saying it "trampled on the efforts of people around the world who have been sweating blood and tears to realise a world without nuclear weapons".

Hidankyo, a grassroots movement

of survivors, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2024 and while accepting the prize, called on countries to abolish nuclear weapons.

Two other atomic bomb survivor groups based in Hiroshima also issued statements of protest, saying: "We firmly demand that no such experiments be conducted"

"In a nuclear war, there are no winners or losers.

"All of humanity becomes the loser," said Hiroshima Congress against A-and-H Bombs (Hiroshima Gensuikin) and the Hiroshima Prefecture Federation of A-Bomb Victims Associations.

Trump's announcement on nuclear testing left much unanswered, chiefly about whether he meant testing weapons systems or conducting test explosions. - AFP

Taiwan rejects 'one country, two systems' plan by China

► Only strength can bring true peace, president tells soldiers

HUKOU: Taiwan does not want China's "one country, two systems" idea and must uphold its freedom and democracy, and resolve to defend itself, said President Lai Ching-te yesterday, rejecting Beijing's latest push to get the island to come under Chinese control.

China said this week it "absolutely will not" rule out using force over Taiwan, striking a much tougher tone than a series of articles in state media that pledged benign rule if the island comes over to Beijing under a system of autonomy it uses for Hong Kong and Macau.

Lai, whom China views as a "separatist", told soldiers at a military base in northern Taiwan's Hukou that only strength can bring true peace.

"Accepting the aggressor's claims and abandoning sovereignty certainly cannot

achieve peace. We must maintain the status quo with dignity and resolve, firmly opposing annexation, aggression and the forced advancement of unification," he said.

"We reject 'one country, two systems' because we will forever uphold our free and democratic constitutional system," he added.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

No major political party in Taiwan supports China's "one country, two systems" idea.

Lai said the Republic of China, which is Taiwan's formal name, and the People's Republic of China are "not subordinate" to each other, adding that "Taiwan's sovereignty cannot be violated or annexed" and its future can only be decided by its people.

"The Taiwanese people safeguarding their sovereignty and preserving their democratic and free way of life should not be viewed as provocation. Investing in national defence is investing in peace."

Lai has pledged to increase military spending to 5% of GDP by 2030, strengthening the island's defences in the face of a rising

threat from its giant neighbour China.

He was in Hukou for a commissioning ceremony for Taiwan's first battalion of M1A2T Abrams tanks, made by General Dynamics Land Systems, a unit of US firm General Dynamics.

Taiwan has received 80 of the 108 tanks it ordered from the United States, the island's most important international backer and arms supplier despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties.

The M1A2T tank can fire high explosive anti-tank warheads and kinetic energy ammunition, such as armour-piercing fin-stabilised discarding sabot.

The United States is bound by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself, although US President Donald Trump has yet to approve new arms sales since he took office earlier this year.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, meeting Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, said he emphasised US concerns about China's activities around Taiwan, as well as in the contested South China Sea. - Reuters

Indigenous Australians celebrate treaty

SYDNEY: The state of Victoria has passed Australia's first treaty with indigenous peoples, a landmark act of recognition long denied to the first inhabitants.

Cheers and applause rang through parliament as lawmakers passed the Bill on Thursday.

The treaty would establish an elected assembly of indigenous representatives, support a truth-telling process to address past grievances and form an advisory body focused on erasing health inequalities.

"This is a historic moment for our people," said Ngarra Murray from the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

"We will tell our children about today, and they will tell their children, passing down to future generations the story of how decades of aboriginal resilience and activism led to Australia's first treaty."

Making up less than 4% of the population, indigenous peoples have lives about eight years shorter than other Australians and are far more likely to be imprisoned or die in police custody.

Generations of indigenous Australians have tried and failed to strike similar treaties with the federal government.

It is seen as a crucial act of recognition that aboriginal Australians held sovereignty over the continent long before the arrival of the colonial fleet in 1788.

Australians in 2023 overwhelmingly voted "no" in a national referendum that sought to better recognise indigenous peoples in the Constitution.

Victoria Premier Jacinta Allan said the treaty would redefine the relationship between indigenous Australians and the state government.

"The treaty gives aboriginal communities the power to shape the policies and services that affect their lives."

The arrival of 11 British ships to set up a penal colony in Sydney Cove in 1788 heralded the long oppression of indigenous peoples, whose ancestors have lived on the continent for more than 60,000 years. - AFP



RADIANT REVELRY ... Shan ethnic people releasing a lantern on the opening day of the week-long Tazaungdaing Lighting Festival in Taunggyi, Myanmar's northeastern Shan State. - AFPIC

Singapore seizes assets tied to alleged scam group

SINGAPORE: Police here have seized over S\$150 million (RM483 million) in assets tied to the Prince Group, a multinational network accused of running vast scam centre operations, the *Straits Times* reported yesterday.

The assets include six properties as well as bank accounts, securities accounts and cash linked to the network and Cambodian businessman Chen Zhi in relation to money laundering and forgery offences, police said.

The seizure came after Britain and the United States sanctioned the Southeast Asia-based network, which has been accused of operating large-scale online scam centres that use trafficked workers to defraud victims across the globe.

Police added that investigations into Chen and his associates commenced in 2024 after receiving intelligence from the Suspicious Transaction Reporting Office.

None of them are currently in Singapore.

In a press release yesterday, the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) said it is working with police to follow up on the case involving the Prince Group.

It added that financial institutions had filed suspicious transaction reports since 2022 and a number of suspicious accounts have been closed.

"This averted larger sums from being held in our financial sector."

The British government said the centres,

located in Cambodia, Myanmar and across the region, used fake job adverts to lure workers who were then forced to commit online fraud under threat of torture.

The US Treasury Department said it has taken what it described as the largest action ever in Southeast Asia, targeting 146 people within the criminal organisation.

In July, MAS penalised six banks and three financial institutions in relation to the country's biggest ever money laundering scandal in 2023.

The case involved more than S\$3 billion in illicit assets seized after 10 foreigners were busted in a series of simultaneous raids in August 2023. - Reuters

BRIEFS

POLITICAL PARTY PHEU THAI ELECTS NEW LEADER

BANGKOK: One of Thailand's largest political parties, founded by ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, elected a new leader yesterday, the party said, following the resignation of his daughter, the former prime minister. Paetongtarn Shinawatra, 39, stepped down as Pheu Thai party chief last week after a court removed her as prime minister in August over an ethics breach linked to a border dispute with Cambodia. Analysts say her departure was a strategic move to shield Pheu Thai from potential legal challenges and could mark the end of the Shinawatra family's decades-long dominance in Thai politics. Pheu Thai members elected former finance deputy minister Julapun Amornvivat as their new leader, according to the party's official Facebook page. Julapun, 50, is son of veteran politician Sompong Amornvivat, who served as deputy prime minister and led Pheu Thai in 2019. - AFP

FLOODS LEAVE 13 DEAD, 11 MISSING IN VIETNAM

HANOI: Heavy rains and floods have left 13 people dead, 11 missing and 34 injured across several central provinces of Vietnam, according to the Vietnam Disaster and Dyke Management Authority, reported Xinhua. More than 116,000 houses remained inundated, 56 others collapsed or were swept away, and nearly 150 houses were damaged, according to the report. The floods also submerged nearly 4,900ha of rice and other crops, damaged around 790ha of fruit trees, and killed more than 17,700 livestock and poultry, it added. Power outages have affected over 438,000 households in four provinces and cities, according to the report. Meanwhile, 29 tonnes of relief supplies from the Russian government have been delivered in Hue city, the report said. - Bernama-Xinhua

Intensified oppression in Iran denounced

GENEVA: United Nations (UN) factfinders on Thursday denounced Iran's intensification of oppression since the country's 12-day war with Israel in June, with more than 21,000 arrests and mistreatment of minorities and journalists.

"Since March, we have documented further deterioration of the human rights situation in Iran," said Sara Hossain, who heads the Independent International Fact Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, a body established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2022.

"Airstrikes by Israel on Iranian territory and a domestic crackdown by Iranian authorities constricted civic space, undermined due process and eroded respect for the right to life."

Sara said of the 21,000 arrested, the Islamic Republic targeted a broad swath of Iran's civil society, including "lawyers, human rights defenders, journalists and even social media users who simply published content relating to the hostilities".

Iran has also ramped up executions, with more than 1,200 this year, exceeding the 2024 total.

"There are strong indications that the government of Iran continues to systematically implement the death penalty in ways that contravene international human rights law.

"We have received information indicating that over 45 journalists face credible threats in seven countries for reporting on events in Iran," she said, denouncing the intimidation and surveillance as violations of free expression and security. – AFP

UK boosts funds to clear bombs in Gaza

LONDON: Britain will provide £4 million (RM22 million) towards international efforts to clear an estimated 7,500 tonnes of unexploded munitions in Gaza that is preventing aid from reaching Palestinians, the United Kingdom (UK) government announced on Thursday.

The funding for the United Nations Mine Action Service (Unmas) would help "surge in" experts to clear land mines, cluster bombs and munitions dropped during the war.

Removing the unexploded ordinance to allow more aid into Gaza is "a vital component" of the recently US-brokered ceasefire agreement, the UK Foreign Ministry said.

"The situation in Gaza is desperate without the vital humanitarian support they need," said Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper.

NGO Handicap International warned earlier this month that an estimated 70,000 tonnes of explosives had been dropped in Gaza.

Based on the UK Foreign Ministry's unexploded munitions estimates, about 10% failed to detonate.

Cooper on Thursday visited Halo, the world's largest humanitarian landmine clearance organisation, at its southwest England site, where she also met Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Unmas representatives.

British NGOs Halo and MAG deliver 69% of all civilian mine clearance globally, with the help of Unmas, according to her ministry. – AFP

Russia strikes Ukraine energy grid, seven killed

➤ We need more air defence systems, tougher sanctions and maximum pressure on Moscow, says prime minister

KYIV: Russia has launched a barrage of drones and missiles at Ukraine's energy infrastructure and other targets, forcing nationwide power restrictions and killing seven people, including a seven-year-old girl, Ukrainian officials said on Thursday.

Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko accused Moscow of targeting Ukrainian people and power supplies as the winter months approach.

"Its goal is to plunge Ukraine into darkness. Ours is to preserve the light. To stop the terror, we need more air defence systems, tougher sanctions and maximum pressure on the aggressor."

Regional officials said two men were killed in the southeastern industrial city of Zaporizhzhia and a seven-year-old girl from the central Vinnytsia region died in

hospital from injuries sustained in the attacks.

The regional governor said a later drone strike on a village south of Zaporizhzhia killed one person and injured another.

In Sumy, a city near the northern border with Russia, the regional governor said 10 Russian drones attacked the city.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said a bomb attack on a thermal power plant in Sloviansk in eastern Donetsk region killed two people and injured a number of others.

Prosecutors in Donetsk region said Russian attacks on dwellings in the city of Kramatorsk killed one person and injured three.

Sloviansk and Kramatorsk are considered key future targets in the slow advance of Russian troops

westward through Donetsk region.

The Russian Defence Ministry said its forces launched a strike on facilities of the Ukrainian military-industrial complex overnight.

Moscow denies targeting civilians and has said its strikes were in response to Ukrainian attacks on Russian infrastructure.

Ukraine has launched regular drone attacks on military and oil sites.

Zelensky said Russia launched more than 650 drones and 50 missiles in the attacks, although most of the drones were neutralised and two-thirds of the missiles were downed.

Air defence units shot down 592 drones and 31 missiles, the Air Force said.

The attacks hit energy facilities in central, western and southeastern regions, Ukrainian officials said.

The government announced nationwide limits on electricity supplies to retail and industrial consumers. In some regions, water supplies and heating were also disrupted.

Regional officials said two energy facilities in the western Lviv region were damaged.

Ukraine's largest private energy company DTEK said its thermal power stations in a number of regions were under attack.

"This attack is a bad blow to our efforts to keep power flowing this winter. Based on the intensity of attacks for the past two months, it is clear that Russia is aiming for the complete destruction of Ukraine's energy system," said DTEK CEO Maxim Timchenko.

Six children were among the 17 people wounded in strikes on Zaporizhzhia, its governor said.

Four people were injured in the Vinnytsia region, officials said.

Air alerts lasted nearly the entire night in Kyiv, where residents took shelter in deep underground metro stations.

"There is a lot of stress involved. When you wake your child in the middle of the night, he cries because he does not understand why he has to do it," said Viktoriya, 39, mother of a six-year-old boy. – Reuters

Israel identifies returned remains of hostages

TEL AVIV: Israel said on Thursday it has identified the remains of hostages Amiram Kuper and Sahar Baruch, whose bodies were returned by Hamas earlier in the day.

A statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the families of the deceased men had been informed after "completion of the identification process by the National Institute of Forensic Medicine".

Militants took 251 people hostage during an attack on Israel on Oct 7, 2023.

Sahar Baruch was taken from Kibbutz Beeri to Gaza and killed during a failed army rescue operation two months later. He was 25 years old when he died.

Amiram Kuper, 84 years old at the time of his abduction, was kidnapped with his wife Nourit Kuper from their home in Kibbutz Nir Oz.

Israel announced his death in captivity in June 2024.

Militants have returned the remains of 17 of the 28 deceased hostages that Hamas agreed to hand over as part of a US-brokered truce deal with Israel.

In a statement, campaign group Hostages and Missing Families Forum expressed support for the families of Kuper and Baruch, and called for the return of the bodies of the remaining dead hostages.

Israel launched a wave of strikes on Gaza from Tuesday to Wednesday after an attack left an Israeli soldier dead in the south of the Palestinian territory.

Gaza's civil defence agency, which operates as a rescue force under Hamas authority, said the strikes killed more than 100 people, including dozens of children, in the worst night of bombing since the truce went into effect on Oct 10.

On Wednesday, Israel said it had



Israel launched a wave of strikes on Gaza from Tuesday to Wednesday after an attack left an Israeli soldier dead in the south of the Palestinian territory. – AFP/IC

begun "renewed enforcement of the ceasefire", and US President Donald Trump and regional mediator Qatar said they expected it to hold.

Hamas has said its fighters had "no connection to the shooting incident in Rafah" and reaffirmed its commitment to the truce.

It delayed handing over what it said were the remains of a deceased hostage, adding that any "escalation will hinder the search, excavation

and recovery of the bodies".

The militant group drew outrage in Israel on Monday after it returned the partial remains of a previously recovered captive, which Israel said was a breach of the truce.

Hamas had said the remains were the 16th body it had agreed to return, but Israeli forensic examination determined that they were partial remains of a hostage whose body had been brought back

about two years ago, according to the prime minister's office.

After the start of this month's ceasefire, the group returned the 20 surviving captives in its custody and began the process of returning the bodies of the dead hostages.

Israel accuses Hamas of reneging on the deal by not returning them quickly enough, but the Palestinian group says it will take time to locate remains buried in Gaza's ruins. – AFP



Equinix rides on wave of AI adoption in Asean

BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in Asean is accelerating at “an unprecedented pace”, creating a surge in demand for digital infrastructure across the region.

Equinix Asia-Pacific president Cyrus Adaggra (*pic*) said growth projections show the Asia-Pacific AI market reaching US\$177 billion (RM742 billion) by 2033, up from US\$30-40 billion in 2024.

“Malaysia, in particular, has emerged as a data centre hotspot, with over 507MW of operational capacity today and a projected jump to nearly 2GW by 2030.

“Colocation revenue is forecast to exceed US\$1.8 billion by the end of the decade, underscoring how rapidly enterprises are upgrading infrastructure to support AI-heavy workloads,” he told *SunBiz*.

Enterprises are increasingly shifting from centralised computing to distributed AI architectures, where processing power is located closer to where data is generated – hospitals, factories, ports or city streets – to reduce latency and meet compliance requirements, he said.

“This is precisely where Equinix plays a crucial role. Our carrier-neutral, AI-ready data centres across Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and, soon, Thailand act as digital airports, enabling enterprises, clouds and partners to interconnect securely, reliably and at speed.

“Combined with our 270-plus data centres worldwide, each designed with AI-readiness and sustainability in mind, Asean enterprises can stay compliant locally, scale globally and innovate responsibly,” Adaggra said.

➤ US tech firm wants to help regional bloc move from being consumer of technology to producer of innovation

On Malaysia’s positioning as a regional AI hub, Adaggra said Asean as a whole is poised to become one of the world’s most dynamic digital economies, projected to reach US\$600 billion in value by 2030. “Reaching that goal requires an underlying digital infrastructure that is consistent, scalable, and interconnected across borders, and that is what Equinix is building.”

Adaggra said US-based Equinix’s expansions in Johor, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Manila and, soon, Bangkok are giving enterprises seamless access to deploy workloads across multiple metros while connecting directly to global cloud providers and partners.

“Our mission is simple: to help Asean move from being a consumer of global technology to a producer of global innovation. Every new build we make is a long-term investment in this region’s ability to create, collaborate and compete on the world stage,” he added.

Global supply chain shifts and rising tariffs are also prompting enterprises to rethink their digital strategies.

“Today’s supply chains run on data as much as they run on goods,” Adaggra observed. “Enterprises are increasingly looking for digital control towers that give them real-time visibility and the ability to make faster decisions.”

Equinix, he said, enables this through globally consistent, carrier-neutral data centres, combined with Equinix Fabric, which provides direct, secure virtual connections to multiple clouds, networks, and partners.

“With tariffs and geopolitical dynamics

reshaping trade patterns, as well as stricter data sovereignty regulations, many enterprises are localising workloads, distributing them across multiple metros, and adopting hybrid multicloud strategies.

“Equinix makes this seamless, enabling customers to shift workloads on demand, connect with multiple cloud providers, and scale operations wherever needed.”

Adaggra emphasised that data sovereignty is now a strategic imperative.

“Governments across Asean are tightening rules around where data must reside, how it can move, and who can access it,” he said.

“Equinix helps organisations address this challenge by offering distributed infrastructure that allows sensitive workloads to stay physically within the country, while still interconnecting securely with global clouds and partners.

“We also support federated AI strategies, which train models locally and share only model parameters, not raw data, across regions. This allows enterprises to innovate with AI while complying with local regulations.”

Beyond connectivity, Equinix is investing heavily in AI-ready infrastructure to help businesses scale workloads efficiently.

“AI workloads are becoming distributed by design,” Adaggra said.

“Training, inference, and data processing are no longer confined to a single cloud region. They need to happen closer to where data is created to cut latency, protect privacy, and meet



sovereignty requirements.”

Equinix facilities, he explained, are built with high-density power, advanced cooling, and on-demand interconnection to enable enterprises to scale graphic-processing unit clusters and storage elastically as workloads grow.

“This approach delivers faster insights, reduces total cost of ownership, and supports compliance with both data regulations and climate goals.”

Looking ahead, Adaggra sees the next wave of Asean’s digital economy being driven by AI everywhere, from real-time fraud detection and telemedicine to smart city traffic management and precision manufacturing.

“These use cases require infrastructure that is closer to the end user, faster and far more energy efficient,” he said.

“Equinix is expanding AI-ready data centres across Asean, embedding liquid cooling and renewable energy into every new build, and enabling enterprises to deploy hybrid, multi-metro architectures at scale.”

He added that Equinix’s neutral platform, with its vast network of global and regional AI providers, makes it a “magnet” for enterprises.

“Our mission is to make innovation easy, giving businesses the ability to build once, deploy anywhere, and connect with anyone, all while staying secure, sustainable and compliant.”

Sirim, Sarawak form partnership to strengthen product safety, standards

PETALING JAYA: Sirim Bhd has strengthened its national role in industrial and consumer protection by formalising a strategic partnership with the Sarawak state government through the Ministry of Utility and Telecommunication (MUT).

Executed via Sirim’s subsidiary, Sirim QAS International, the collaboration establishes a comprehensive framework to ensure the safety, quality and performance of all electrical and gas appliances imported into the state.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) signifies an important milestone in the collaboration between Sirim and a state authority, focusing on the implementation of a unified product certification and digital verification system.

It represents a meaningful step towards aligning Sarawak’s technical requirements with National and International Standards, while supporting the Sarawak Post Covid-19 Development Strategy 2030, which emphasises sustainability, innovation and a technology-driven economy

Under the partnership, Sirim QAS will provide a full suite of conformity assessment services to support MUT’s regulatory functions. These include product certification, inspection and consignment testing for regulated equipment, as well as safety, quality and performance testing.

The partnership will also validate test reports from domestic and international laboratories and introduce a joint MUT–Sirim product label featuring QR codes that allow consumers to



Jafri (left) and Md Adha exchange the MoU witnessed by Julaihi (back, centre).

verify a product’s certification status instantly via mobile devices.

The MoU was signed by Sirim QAS International CEO Md Adha Rahmat and MUT permanent secretary Datu Jafri Lias. The document was later exchanged in the presence of Minister of Utility and Telecommunication of Sarawak Datuk Seri Julaihi Narawi, Sirim QAS International chairman Datuk Omar Shariff Mydeen and Sirim Bhd acting president and

group CEO Nik Sazali Nik Hussin.

“This collaboration reflects Sarawak’s commitment to ensuring that all products entering the state meet the highest safety and quality standards while promoting technology transfer and innovation,” said Jafri.

“Sirim is proud to support Sarawak’s aspirations through this partnership. It reinforces our national mandate to advance consumer protection, promote quality assurance and enable sustainable

industrial growth,” said Nik Sazali.

“Every year, thousands of electrical and gas appliances enter the Sarawak market and this partnership ensures these products meet stringent safety standards before reaching consumers. Both organisations will also engage in technical cooperation and capacity-building programmes to strengthen Sarawak’s local standards and quality infrastructure,” he added.

By integrating Sirim’s nationally recognised conformity assessment expertise with MUT’s regulatory authority, this partnership delivers a more streamlined product approval process, strengthens Sarawak’s technical ecosystem, and contributes to the state’s vision of a modern, safe and innovation-driven economy.

Sirim’s collaboration with the Sarawak state government began in 2006 through a joint initiative with the Electrical Inspectorate Unit (EIU) under the Ministry of Utility and Telecommunication. This partnership led to the introduction of the Sirim–EIU Safety Label, which regulates the entry of electrical appliances into Sarawak and ensures consumer safety through certified compliance.

The signing of the MoU builds on that foundation, expanding the scope of cooperation to include gas appliances, digital verification via QR-coded product labels, and a wider range of conformity assessment services, thereby further strengthening Sarawak’s regulatory framework.

SHAH ALAM: The Selangor International Business Summit 2025 (SIBS 2025) concluded with RM8.17 billion in potential transactions, strengthening Selangor's position as one of Southeast Asia's leading business and investment hubs.

The four-day summit, held on Oct 8-11 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, was hosted by the Selangor state government and organised by Invest Selangor Bhd.

The ninth edition featured 740 exhibition booths and 581 exhibitors from across the Asia-Pacific region, as well as participation from 10 Malaysian states.

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

Each segment brought together industry leaders, innovators and policymakers to discuss opportunities in trade, investment, and technology.

The summit drew 56,938 visitors from 89 countries, along with 179 speakers and 5,810 conference attendees, underscoring its growing international profile and role as a regional platform for knowledge exchange.

SPARK 2025 recorded the highest potential transaction value at RM6.96 billion, followed by SABC RM844 million, SIE F&B RM96.97 million,

SIBS 2025 generates RM8.17b in potential deals

➤ Ninth edition of Selangor International Business Summit reinforces state's position as a leading regional business and investment hub

SDEC RM208 million, SAS RM52.07 million and SICS RM5.1 million.

Among the key highlights of SIBS 2025 were the signings of memorandums of understanding (MoUs), underscoring the summit's role as a catalyst for strategic investments and cross-industry collaboration.

A total of seven MoUs were signed between Invest Pahang's strategic partners with investing companies during SPARK 2025, the highest by any participating state.

These included a RM130 million agreement for the Jerantut Square

Development Project, which aims to promote urban regeneration and commercial growth in central Pahang.

Another notable partnership saw Worldwide Holdings Bhd, through its energy arm Worldwide Energy Development Sdn Bhd, collaborate with Ace Gases Sdn Bhd and SKS Coachbuilders Sdn Bhd on a RM20 million green hydrogen hub in Batang Kali, Selangor.

The initiative integrates renewable energy generation, hydrogen storage, and mobility applications, aligning with Selangor's green energy transition and Malaysia's decarbonisation goals.

During SABC 2025, a memorandum of agreement between Malaysia Chamber of Commerce Indonesia and Asiosasi Badan Usaha Pelabuhan Indonesia, valued at RM844 million, was exchanged to strengthen business relations in the maritime and port sectors.

At SIE F&B 2025, Anramin Industry (M) Sdn Bhd and Noh Jubril Educational Concept Ltd signed an MoU valued at RM100,000 to enhance cooperation in education,

product innovation and international market expansion. The partnership focuses on knowledge exchange and long-term business growth.

Under SDEC 2025, an MoU between Opstar Bhd and AsicAI Co marked a major milestone in advancing AI-driven IC design and semiconductor solutions, supporting Selangor's mission to build a world-class deep-tech ecosystem valued at RM50 million.

The event also saw Xendit Malaysia launch its brand showcase, reaffirming its commitment to helping SMEs and startups accelerate digital adoption through financial technology innovations.

Meanwhile, SAS featured a RM50 million MoU between Pecca Aviation Services Sdn Bhd (PASSB) and Betamek Research Sdn Bhd. This partnership combines Betamek Research's expertise in electronics engineering and design with PASSB's capabilities in aircraft cabin interior solutions to advance innovation in aerospace technology.

At SICS, Yayasan Warisan Anak Selangor signed MoUs with UniUni

from South Korea and Hayat Technologies, worth RM1.85 million, to introduce and localise assistive device technology and innovation in Malaysia.

Overall, the MoUs signed during SIBS 2025 covered a wide range of sectors, including advanced manufacturing, logistics, renewable energy, and tourism development, and the digital economy, all of which are expected to generate sustainable investments, create new jobs and strengthen industry value chains across Malaysia.

Participants and investors lauded SIBS for its conducive business environment and networking value.

"It's a very good opportunity to have a clear view of Malaysia's industrial potential and its strong ecosystem," said Christophe Vleic, JLL Appraisal & Property Services Sdn Bhd.

Jeremy Chan of Mindwave Studio said, "It's exciting to see the variety of innovation coming to Selangor each year. The summit provides endless possibilities for collaboration and growth."

Malaysia Airlines strengthens China market presence with new tie-ups, expanded routes

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia Airlines has reaffirmed its long-term commitment to the China market through a series of trade events and strategic partnerships in October, underscoring its confidence in the market and plans to strengthen regional connectivity.

Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) airlines chief commercial officer Dersensish Aresandiran said China remains a cornerstone of the airline's international growth strategy, reflecting its sustained investment and focus on the market.

"China remains a cornerstone of our international strategy, and our partnerships here reflect our long-term commitment to the market. In the first half of 2025, we carried close to 250,000 passengers from China with load factors above 80%, underscoring the strong demand for our premium services."

He added that beginning this month, Malaysia Airlines will increase its Xiamen flights to four times weekly and resume daily Chengdu services in January 2026, bringing its China network to seven gateways and up to 60 weekly flights.

"These expansions, alongside our new collaborations with leading partners in the market, will further strengthen our position as the gateway of choice for Chinese travellers connecting through Kuala Lumpur to Southeast Asia, Australasia and beyond," Dersensish said.

The airline's Malaysia Airlines Trade Gala held in Shanghai on Oct 15 brought together government officials, corporate partners and travel agents to celebrate its longstanding ties with China and



Malaysia Aviation Group managing director and Malaysia Airlines CEO Datuk Captain Izham Ismail and Dersensish together with leading China trade partners.

outline its next phase of growth.

The event followed a strong performance during China's Golden Week holiday from Oct 1 to 8, where the airline recorded over 95% load factor across its China network and carried more than 6,000 outbound passengers to Malaysia and other destinations.

An exclusive media and partners engagement was held in Chengdu on Oct 21, providing a platform to discuss the upcoming daily Kuala Lumpur-Chengdu flights. Operated by Malaysia Airlines' Boeing 737-8 aircraft, the service will offer 2,436 weekly seats to support tourism, business and student travel between both countries.

During the same period, Malaysia Airlines formalised four key memorandums of understanding with prominent Chinese partners to strengthen collaboration in travel distribution, payments and digital innovation.

The partnerships include Trip.Biz, which will recognise Malaysia Airlines as its preferred airline partner for SME and corporate travel across 25 markets, alongside integration of the MHcorporate portal into its platform. The airline also signed with Ant International (Alipay+) to collaborate on digital payment solutions, marketing campaigns and data-

driven personalisation for travellers within Alipay+'s ecosystem.

Additionally, a partnership with UnionPay International will enhance payment accessibility for customers across Malaysia Airlines' channels while supporting joint destination marketing initiatives.

Meanwhile, a renewed agreement with Chengdu Spring Travel under Malaysia Aviation Group's broader China growth strategy will expand the airline's footprint into secondary markets through Firefly's scheduled services from Chongqing and Macau, complemented by joint promotional efforts ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026.

CTRM, Skyways Technics forge MRO partnership

PETALING JAYA: CTRM Testing Laboratory Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Composites Technology Research Malaysia (CTRM) Sdn Bhd, signed a long-term service level agreement with Skyways Technics Asia Sdn Bhd to boost aircraft maintenance and repair capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region.

The partnership is for the repair of radomes, which are aircraft nose cones that protect radar and communication systems.

Radomes are made of nearly 30 layers of laminated prepreg material in a honeycomb structure. These require specialised equipment and expertise to maintain.

Under the agreement, Skyways Technics Asia, which is part of the global maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services provider Skyways Technics, will utilise CTRM's autoclave facilities and composite repair expertise to enable these repairs to be carried out locally.

This partnership allows faster turnaround times, improved cost efficiencies, and reduces reliance on overseas services. It also supports Malaysia's goal to become more self-sufficient in aerospace MRO and strengthens the Asia-Pacific aerospace supply chain.

CTRM, a subsidiary of DRB-Hicom Bhd, is Malaysia's leading aerospace composites manufacturer and a key supplier for global aircraft programmes.

Denmark-based Skyways Technics operates hubs in Malaysia and other countries and offers aircraft maintenance, repair, and spare parts.

China October factory output dips as exports fade

► Manufacturing PMI falls to six-month low as front-loaded US orders weaken, adding pressure on Beijing to shore up growth

BEIJING: China's factory activity shrank for a seventh month in October, dragged by a drop in new export orders as the boost from months of front-loading to beat US President Donald Trump's tariff threats finally wore off.

The official purchasing managers' index (PMI) fell to 49.0 in October from 49.8 in September, a six-month low, the National Bureau of Statistics' survey showed yesterday, remaining below the 50-mark separating growth from contraction and missing a forecast of 49.6 in a Reuters poll.

Policymakers had banked on producers rushing goods to the US – the world's number 1 consumer economy – ahead of the potential triple-digit levies on Chinese goods over the first three quarters of 2025 to help offset weak domestic demand.

But analysts had warned that the strategy was unsustainable, effectively borrowing growth from the future to make the world's second-largest economy appear stable.

Factory owners stepped up efforts to reach

new customers in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, but are increasingly selling at a loss with no other markets to absorb anywhere near the US\$400 billion (RM1.7 trillion) of goods the US once purchased.

"Given that we are actually seeking a bit more stimulus in the fourth quarter – investment driven by policy financing tools and new government bonds – I am a bit surprised by the drop in the PMI reading this month," said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

"Exports seemed to be a major drag this month. It might be indicative of a payback of the earlier front-loading of export orders," he added.

Economists estimate the loss of the US market has cut export growth by around 2 percentage points, or roughly 0.3% of GDP.

Policymakers are looking to see whether China's US\$19 trillion economy is on track to hit its official 2025 growth target of around 5%, without needing to reach for further stimulus.

The non-manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose to 50.1 from 50.0 in September. The increase was supported by an uptick in the services sector, whose reading edged up to 50.2 from 50.1, while the construction component slipped to 49.1 from 49.3 in September.

"Some of this weakness may reverse in the near-term, but any boost to exports from the latest US-China trade 'deal' is likely to be modest and wider headwinds to growth will

persist," said Zichun Huang, China economist at Capital Economics.

Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday agreed to de-escalate tensions, including through a one-year delay in reciprocal tariffs, but the agreement does little to address a deeper divide between the two superpowers.

That keeps pressure on China's policymakers to find a way to help manufacturers mount a sustainable economic recovery, arrest a slide in property prices and bolster trade ties with the rest of the world.

China's economic growth slowed to 4.8% in the third quarter, its weakest pace in a year. While that keeps the economy on track to meet its target of roughly 5% this year, it raises questions about Beijing's reliance on external demand.

The ruling Communist Party pledged to boost domestic consumption following a key policy meeting last week, while also emphasising efforts to strengthen its vast industrial system.

However, analysts question whether Beijing has anything new to offer or is simply reaching for its usual playbook of channeling resources to large firms while bypassing private producers and households.

Some analysts believe Beijing doesn't need more stimulus this year, while others see more infrastructure investment as a way to ensure the economy remains on target in the fourth quarter. – Reuters

Samsung, Nvidia in talks on next-gen HBM chips

SEOUL: Samsung Electronics said yesterday it is in "close discussion" to supply its next-generation high-bandwidth memory (HBM) chips, or HBM4, to Nvidia, as the South Korean chipmaker scrambles to catch up with rivals in the AI chip race.

Samsung, which plans to market the new chip next year, did not specify when it aims to ship the latest version of its HBM chip, a key building block of artificial intelligence (AI) chipsets.

Local rival SK Hynix, Nvidia's top HBM chip supplier, on Wednesday said it aims to start shipping its latest HBM4 chips in the fourth quarter and expand sales next year.

Nvidia, in a statement announcing cooperation with Samsung, said it is in "key supply collaboration for HBM3E and HBM4", without elaborating.

In a separate deal, Samsung said it will purchase 50,000 high-end Nvidia chips to build an AI-enhanced semiconductor factory aimed at improving chip manufacturing speed and yields.

Samsung's share price rose as much as 4.32% after the announcements.

Chairman Jay Y. Lee and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang met over fried chicken and beer on Thursday during Huang's visit to Korea to attend the Apec CEO Summit.

Lee said Nvidia is a key customer and strategic partner and highlighted more than two decades of collaboration.

Jeff Kim, head of research at KB Securities, said HBM4 likely needs further testing but Samsung widely is seen to be in a favourable position given its production capacity.

"If Samsung supplies HBM4 chips to Nvidia, it could secure a significant market share that it was unable to achieve with previous HBM series products," Kim said.

Samsung has been slower to capitalise on the AI-driven memory chip boom, leading to weaker earnings performance and a reshuffle of its chip division last year. Its earnings recovered in the latest quarter driven by conventional memory chip demand.

This week, it said it sells its current-generation HBM3E chips to "all related customers", indicating it has joined rivals in supplying the latest 12-layer HBM3E chips to Nvidia.

The launch of HBM4 chips will be a major test of Samsung's ability to regain its edge in the market, analysts said.

HBM – a type of dynamic random access memory standard first produced in 2013 – stacks memory chips vertically to save space and power while handling data-heavy AI tasks. – Reuters

OpenAI, Oracle plan 1GW Stargate data centre in Michigan

BENGALURU: OpenAI, Oracle and Related Digital will build a data-centre campus of more than 1 gigawatt in Saline Township, Michigan, as part of their Stargate push to expand US artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure capacity.

The announcement made on Thursday underscores the AI industry's surging appetite for computing power, driven by the pursuit of technology capable of matching or surpassing human intelligence.

The companies said it was a multi-billion dollar investment, without disclosing the exact figure. Industry executives have said 1 GW of

computing power, enough to power roughly 750,000 US homes, can cost around US\$50 billion (RM210 billion).

The construction is slated to begin in early 2026.

The project is part of Oracle and OpenAI's 4.5-GW Stargate expansion and, together with six other US sites, raises the infrastructure group's planned capacity to more than 8 GW and total investment to over US\$450 billion in the next three years.

OpenAI said the move kept Stargate ahead of schedule to meet its US\$500 billion, 10-GW

commitment. The startup has shared few details on how it plans to fund the spending.

Earlier this week, it completed a restructuring that frees the ChatGPT maker to move away from its nonprofit roots. Reuters has reported it was laying the groundwork for an initial public offering that could value the company at up to US\$1 trillion.

But surging valuations of AI companies and their massive AI spending commitments, which total more than US\$1 trillion for OpenAI, have raised fears that the AI boom is inflating into a bubble. – Reuters

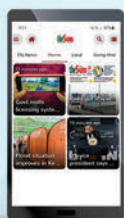
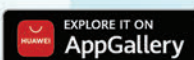
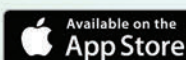
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Amazon shares soar as cloud growth beats expectations

SAN FRANCISCO: Amazon's cloud revenue rose at the fastest clip in nearly three years, helping the company forecast quarterly sales above estimates and driving its shares up 14% in after-market trading.

The company projected increased capital spending next year. The online retailer benefited as businesses continue to spend relentlessly on artificial intelligence (AI) software development. Massive cloud demand is helping the tech company ease the pressure from softer growth at its e-commerce business, which is gearing up for the critical holiday season amid weakness in consumer confidence stemming from global trade uncertainty.

Amazon's rally in extended trading lifted the company's market value by about US\$330 billion (RM1.4 trillion). A stock rally of the same size in yesterday's official trading session would make it Amazon's biggest one-day percentage gain since 2015.

"AWS is growing at a pace we haven't seen since 2022," CEO Andy Jassy said in a statement. "We continue to see strong demand in AI and core infrastructure, and we've been focused on accelerating capacity."

Amazon chief financial officer Brian Olsavsky said he expected full-year capital expenditures to be around US\$125 billion, and higher next year, without providing details. The company booked US\$89.9 billion in capital expenditures through the first three quarters, largely on AI projects.

Its cloud unit Amazon Web Services (AWS) reported a 20% rise in revenue in the third quarter ending in September, compared with estimates of a 17.95% increase. Amazon shrugged off a tough prior week when an extended outage at AWS felled many of the most popular websites and consumer apps.

Amazon has been the worst-performing stock among the "Magnificent 7" megacap tech companies, due in part to a nagging reputation as a laggard in AI development.

"The report confirms Amazon's operations are firing on all cylinders after a year of relative underperformance," said Ethan Feller, stock strategist at Zacks Investment Research. He said despite the stock's nearly flat growth this year, "the company's fundamentals never meaningfully weakened."

Amazon projected total net sales of between US\$206 billion and US\$213 billion for the fourth quarter, while analysts on average were expecting revenue of US\$208.12 billion, according to data compiled by LSEG. Normally subdued, Jassy adopted an exuberant tone on the call with analysts.

"I look at the momentum we have right now, and I believe that we can continue to grow and click like this for a while," he said. "I think there are multiple places where we can expect to continue to grow," he added, referring to advertising and retail sales.

The strong results from AWS, the world's largest cloud provider, followed stellar cloud revenue growth reported on Wednesday by Microsoft's Azure and Google Cloud, the No. 2 and No. 3 players in the industry, respectively. — Reuters

'AI cannot make cinema'

➤ Director Linklater says true storytelling still depends on human intuition, emotion and imperfection – not algorithms

LOS ANGELES: Can great art be made without human genius and all its flaws? It's a vital question at a time when artificial intelligence (AI) threatens to subsume Hollywood.

Through new movies *Nouvelle Vague* and *Blue Moon*, director Richard Linklater offers an answer – delving into the lives of two brilliant, volatile men whose films and plays shaped French New Wave cinema and Broadway.

His conclusion? "AI is not going to make a film," the US indie auteur tells AFP.

"Storytelling, narrative, characters? Something that connects to humanity? That's a whole 'nother thing," says the Texan whose notable films include *Boyhood*, the *Before* trilogy, *School of Rock* and *Hit Man*.

Linklater's *Nouvelle Vague*, streaming on Netflix from Nov 14, charts how young French director Jean-Luc Godard defied all filmmaking convention to create his 1960 classic *Breathless*.

It captures the swagger, charisma and impulsiveness with which Godard convinced financial backers and Hollywood starlet Jean Seberg to make a debut feature that had neither a script nor a workable filming schedule.

"He's a little full of shit, but he's a

genius. A revolution is going on, but he's the only one who knows it," Linklater says of Godard, an icon of cinema's French New Wave movement in the late 1950s and 60s.

By contrast *Blue Moon*, in cinemas now, depicts Broadway lyricist Lorenz Hart at the end of his career.

With composer Richard Rodgers, Hart wrote classic songs like *The Lady is a Tramp*, *My Funny Valentine* and, of course, *Blue Moon*.

But the film captures a single evening, in which it becomes clear Rodgers has moved on to even greater success with new partner Oscar Hammerstein II, with the debut of their hit musical *Oklahoma!*

Within months, Hart will be dead from alcoholism.

"It's become very clear that the times are leaving him behind. They're leaving behind his genius," says Linklater.

Which brings us back to the question of human genius and art.

For Linklater, AI is "just one more tool" that artists can use, but it "doesn't have intuitions or consciousness."

"I think it's going to be less revolutionary than everybody thinks in the next few years," he told AFP in an interview ahead of the Los Angeles premiere of *Nouvelle Vague* at The American French Film Festival.

The French New Wave's trademark documentary-style realism was made possible in part by technology – the arrival of cheap, light, portable cameras.

But Linklater rejects the claim that the cost savings and flexibility offered by AI could unleash another filmmaking revolution.

"You're gonna see some cool stuff," he concedes.

But "the hardest thing to do is still to tell a compelling story that people want to see and be engaged with," he says.

"That's a lot of points you have to hit – that's acting, that's story structure, that's pace, style.

"No algorithm is gonna do that. No prompt is gonna do that."

Among Linklater's future projects is *Merrily We Roll Again*, adapted from Stephen Sondheim's musical.

Set over two decades, *Merrily* charts the demise of a friendship between three artists, and is told in reverse chronology.

As if to prove his point about technology, Linklater has decided to shoot the film over a 20 year span, allowing the actors to truly age backward on screen.

It is a more complex variation of his Oscar-winning *Boyhood* – which he filmed across 12 years.

Of course, AI has recently been used to "de-age" actors, like in Tom Hanks' 2024 film *Here*. But Linklater has little interest.

"It's not a visual trick, you know? I really want an actor of a certain age to be playing a character," he explains.

Asking a 25-year-old to play a 45-year-old is "not authentic" because young people "don't know what that even means," he says.

"I want the actors to be that much older and wiser."

So, don't expect to see *Merrily* in theaters any time soon.

"That's my hanging-on-to-humanity approach!" chuckles Linklater.

Netflix taps bank to explore bid for Warner Bros Discovery

LOS ANGELES: Netflix is actively exploring a bid for Warner Bros Discovery's studio and streaming business, retaining a financial adviser and gaining access to financial information, according to three sources familiar with the matter.

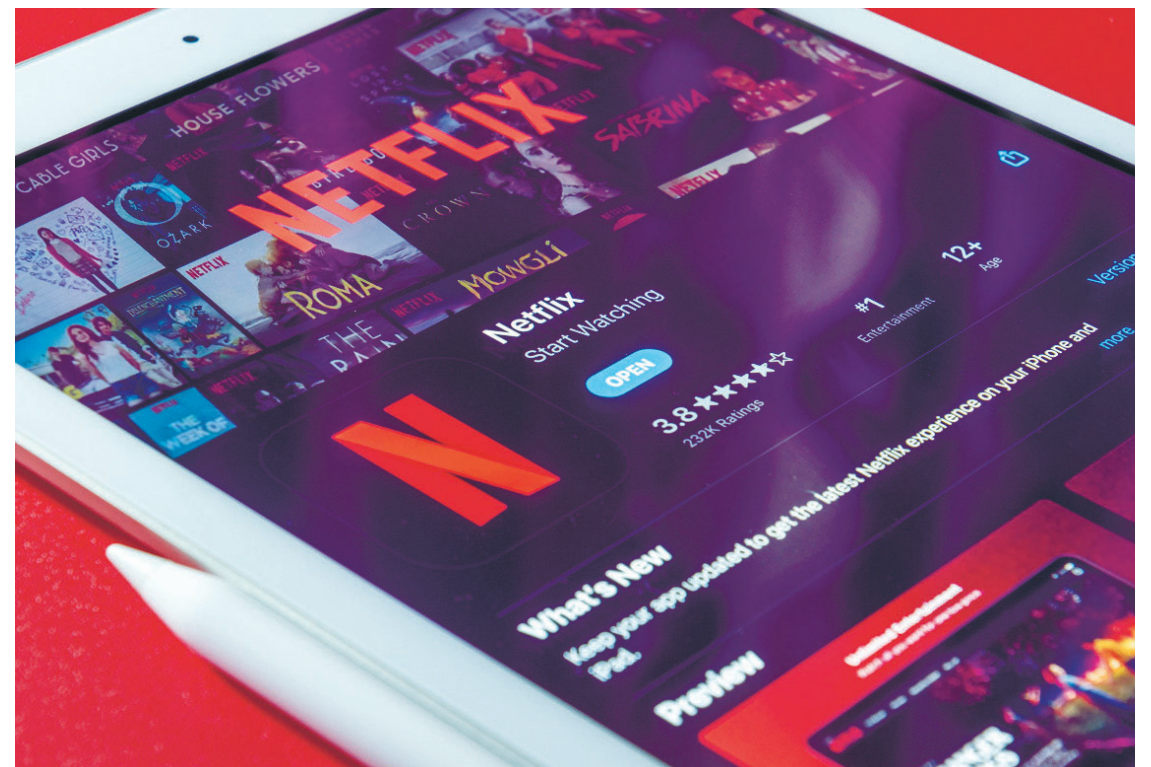
The video streaming service has hired Moelis & Co, the investment bank that advised Skydance Media on its successful bid for Paramount Global, to evaluate a prospective offer, two of the sources said. Netflix also has been granted access to the data room, which contains the financial details needed to make a bid, according to two of the sources familiar with the matter.

Warner Bros Discovery and Moelis declined to comment. Netflix could not be reached for comment.

Owning Warner Bros' studio business would give Netflix control over some of Hollywood's most successful stories and characters, including the Harry Potter and DC Comics franchises.

Warner Bros' prolific television studio also produces many of Netflix's hits, including original series like *Running Point*, *You* and *Maid*. HBO and its companion streaming service would add more prestige dramas, and subscribers.

Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos told investors last week that while the company is traditionally "more builders than buyers," it does evaluate acquisitions based on criteria such as the size of the opportunity and whether it would strengthen the company's



Move signals Netflix's biggest push yet to expand beyond streaming into full-scale studio ownership and premium content production. — UNSPLASH PIX

entertainment offerings.

Sarandos indicated Netflix would not be interested in acquiring Warner Bros Discovery's cable television networks, which include CNN, TNT, Food Network and Animal Planet. "We've been very clear in the past that we have no interest in owning legacy media networks," Sarandos said in the company's third-quarter investor video. "There is no change there." Warner Bros

Discovery announced last week that it would begin evaluating options, after receiving a trio of unsolicited offers from Paramount Skydance to acquire the entire company. The company said its board would consider whether to move forward with its planned split, which would separate the Warner Bros film and television studios, HBO and the companion HBO Max streaming service from its television business, or pursue a

sale of all or parts of the company. Comcast president Mike Cavanaugh told investors on Thursday the company is evaluating media assets that would be "complementary" to its existing business. He also appeared to dismiss those who are skeptical of Comcast winning regulatory approval, saying "more things are viable than maybe some of the public commentary that's out there." — Reuters

TOP SHOTS OF THE WEEK



NEW JOURNEY ... Capital A Bhd announced on Thursday that its restructuring has entered its final chapter and completion is targeted for December, after which it will apply for PN17 uplift by year-end. Directors from all Capital A entities, AirAsia X and AirAsia Aviation Group Ltd posing for a group photo after the announcement are, from left, Tan Sri Jamaludin Ibrahim, Datuk Seri Mohammed Shazalli Ramly, Datuk Abdul Mutalib Alias, Tan Sri Tony Fernandes, Brig-Gen (R) Datuk Fadzillah Abdullah, Datuk Fam Lee Ee, Datuk Kamarudin Meranun, Datuk Abdel Aziz @ Abdul Aziz Abu Bakar, Datuk Mohamed Khadar Merican, Senator Datuk Dr Ras Adiba Radzi and Chin Min Ming.



PRIZED COATINGS ... Wasco Coatings Middle East QFZ LLC, a subsidiary of Malaysia's Wasco Bhd, has been awarded the 'Best AI Solution - Corporate' prize at the Qatar Digital Business Awards 2025 in Doha organised by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of Qatar. Celebrating the win are (from left) Wasco Coatings Middle East QFZ vice-president, technical Wayne Keith Buttimore; Wasco chief information officer Tee Tze Phei; and Wasco Coatings Middle East QFZ IT executive Nithin Bharathan and project engineer Jeppe Van Der Kamp.



STRATEGIC RELOCATION ... Allianz Malaysia Bhd celebrated the grand opening of its new branch in George Town, Penang, on Thursday, strengthening the company's footprint in the northern region. Located along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, the new branch is a strategic relocation from its previous premises on China Street. At the opening of the new branch are Allianz Malaysia CEO Sean Wang (fifth, left); Allianz Life Insurance Malaysia Bhd CEO Charles Ong (far right) and Allianz Malaysia CFO Giulio Slavich (fourth, right) with senior management of Allianz Malaysia.



MDV FORUM ... Malaysia Debt Ventures Bhd (MDV), an agency under the purview of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti on Wednesday hosted the inaugural MDV NextWave under the theme 'Driving Economic Transformation and Sustainability through Technology'. The forum held in Kuala Lumpur explored strategies to advance Malaysia's transformation through technology, innovation and sustainability. From left: MDV CEO Rizal Fauzi and chairman Wong Chen; Mosti under-secretary, strategic technology and S&T applications Aidawati Misdar; and Malaysian Investment Development Authority deputy CEO of investment development Zalina Zainol at the launch of MDV NextWave 2025.



INFRA FINANCING ... The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has signed cooperation agreements with Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank), CIMB, AmBank and Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Bhd (BPMB) to jointly mobilise up to US\$6 billion (RM28 billion) in financing for sustainable and technology-enabled infrastructure projects across the Asean region. At the signing of the following the 47th Asean Summit in Kuala Lumpur are (from left) BPMB managing director group corporate and investment banking Wee Yee Tat; CIMB, CEO, group wholesale banking Chu Kok Wei; Energy Transition and Water Transformation Ministry deputy secretary-general Mareena Mahpuduz; AIIB chief investment officer, Public Sector (Region 1) and Financial Institutions and Funds (Global) Clients Kim-See Lim; Maybank deputy group CEO, global banking, Md Farid Kairi; and AmBank managing director, wholesale banking, Datuk Jamzidi Khalid.

SUPERIOR AWARD ... Superior Property Development Sdn Bhd achieved a significant milestone this month as it was recognised as one of country's distinguished developers at the 12th PropertyGuru Asia Awards Malaysia, held in partnership with iProperty. PropertyGuru Asia Awards 2025 celebrated excellence across 73 categories, highlighting the best in design, innovation and sustainability within Malaysia's property industry. From left: Superior Property Development vice-presidents Chong Lim Jiunn and Chang Han How and COO Terry Lim Teck Lee, and a representative from PropertyGuru.





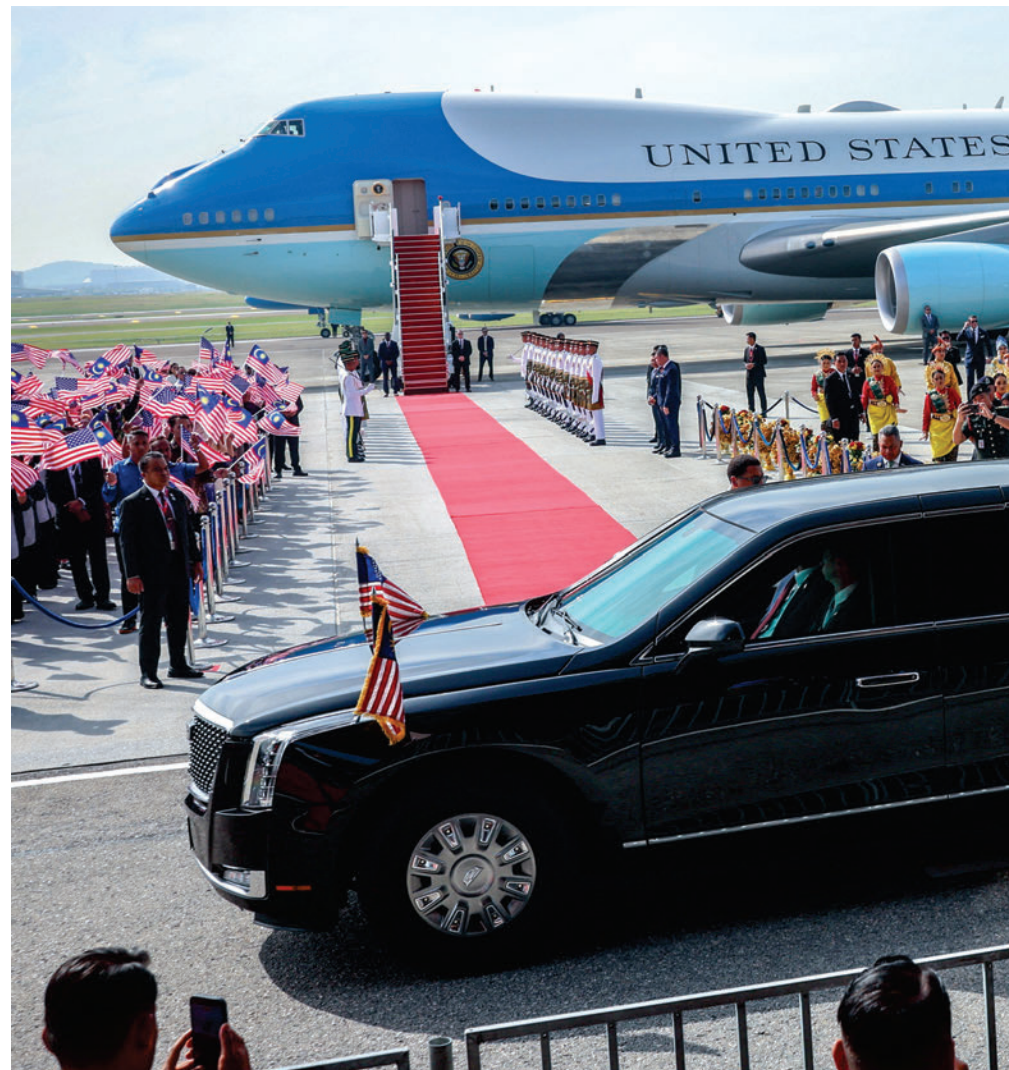
JOYFUL JIG ... United States President Donald Trump dances to the beat of a performance by a traditional Malay dance troupe as he is welcomed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim upon his arrival for the Asean Summit. – **BERNAMAPIC**



ACCORD APPLAUSE ... Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and United States President Donald Trump witness the signing of the Cambodia-Thailand peace deal between Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet and Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul. – **BERNAMAPIC**



SUMMIT SNAP ... A photographer takes a picture of tourists with the official 47th Asean Summit logo at Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur. – **AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN**



PRESIDENTIAL PLANE ... The Beast limousine, parked alongside Air Force One as US President Donald Trump arrives.



PRESS PROFESSIONALS ... Local and international media personnel gather to provide coverage for the Asean Summit at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. – **ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THE SUN**



CULTURAL CONCERT ... Performers from Asean member countries displaying their talents during the Best of Asean Performing Arts event at the Seri Angkasa Auditorium. – **ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THE SUN**



YOUTHFUL BLISS ... Two children play amid the rubble of destroyed houses at the Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City. – **REUTERSPIC**



CELEBRATORY CARRIAGE ... Participants taking part in the Trunajaya Parade to commemorate the 82nd birthday of Yogyakarta Palace King Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X in Malioboro, Yogyakarta. – **AFPPIC**



ump prepares to depart after attending the 47th Asean Summit. – **BERNAMAPIC**



SOMBRE STRIDES ... A mourner holding a portrait of the late Queen Sirikit as Bangkok residents walk towards the Grand Palace in Thailand to pay their last respects. – **AFPPIC**



TITANIC TIDE ... Pedestrians stand at a safe distance as massive waves break on the Digue Nord lighthouse in Le Havre, western France. – **AFPPIC**



VIBRANT VENERATION ... Hindu devotees gathering for a procession in honour of the Sun god during the 'Chhath Puja' festival along the banks of the Brahmaputra River in Guwahati, India. – **AFPPIC**

He's raising kids, not egos

HE makes the kids' breakfast before I've even had my coffee. While I rush out the door, bag in hand, he's already packing school bags, coaxing our daughter to brush her teeth and checking emails between bites of toast. Somewhere between the rice cooker and Microsoft Teams, he's redefining what it means to be a man.

We weren't raised to imagine men like him. The "ideal husband" once meant the breadwinner – the man who left early, came home late and complained about traffic over dinner. The one who never changed a diaper, who may "help" with the dishes on weekends but still needed applause for it.

But my husband is a different kind of man – the kind who knows exactly where the spice powders are kept, which detergent works best on school uniforms and how to calm our seven-year-old autistic daughter when the world feels too loud.

He works from home but that phrase doesn't quite capture it. He lives from home and holds the household in his two hands, balancing deadlines and dishes, client calls and

chicken curry. While I go out into the world chasing stories and headlines, he is the one keeping our small world intact.

Sometimes people ask – half out of curiosity and half in disbelief: "So your husband doesn't mind staying home?" I smile and say: "He minds the dishes, not the titles."

There is still something quietly radical about a man who does what women have done for generations – the invisible, endless work of care.

He does it without resentment and without theatrics. When our daughter has a meltdown, he doesn't raise his voice. He waits, breathing with her, matching her rhythm until she feels safe again. He is the one who decodes her moods, translates her silences and understands her world in ways words can't reach.

Our son, 10 and curious, once asked, "Why is *Amma* always working?" Before I could answer, my

husband said gently, "Because *Amma* is building a future for you and your sister."

That is what I mean when I say partnership. It is not about keeping score or taking turns; it is about two people standing in different rooms of the same house, holding up the same roof. And he is not alone. Across Malaysia, more men are quietly redrawing the boundaries of masculinity – men who cook breakfast before school runs, attend therapy sessions with their children or manage households while their wives go to work. They are not "househusbands" or "helpers"; they are fathers, partners and equals – fully present in their families' lives.

Still, the world hasn't quite caught up yet. There are jokes, raised eyebrows and casual disbelief that a man could take pride in domestic life. Old habits die hard but change has a way of seeping in quietly, one home at a time.

These men, like my husband, are

dismantling the old blueprint of masculinity that equated worth with salary and strength with silence. They are teaching their sons that gentleness is not weakness and showing their daughters that equality can be lived, not just spoken.

I'll admit, there are days when guilt creeps in – that modern mother's guilt that arrives uninvited, whispering that maybe I should be the one at home, cooking *rasam* and rice, supervising homework. But then, I come home late and the house smells of *sambal* and soap, the kids are asleep and my husband is sitting on the couch, eyes tired but peaceful. That is when I realise: this isn't a reversal; it is an evolution.

He is not "helping me out"; he is being a parent. He is not "babysitting"; he is raising his children. And he does it not because I asked him to but because love – real love – is collaborative.

We keep saying Malaysia needs transformation – economic, political and institutional – but maybe the quiet revolution has already begun. In our homes, kitchens and living rooms – where men are learning to nurture,

listen and show up, not because they have to but because they want to.

My husband doesn't talk about gender equality; he lives it. He does the laundry before his next meeting, cooks *sambal* while attending a conference call and hums his favourite Tamil song while hanging school uniforms to dry. And in that everyday ordinariness, there is something extraordinary – a man comfortable with himself, building gentleness into his day.

Maybe this is what progress looks like – not men "helping" women but men and women reimagining life together. Both hands in the same sink, hearts tuned to the same chaos.

So, here's to the new Malaysian men – the ones who raise kids, not egos; who lead with love, not control and who knows that strength is not in paychecks but in presence. Because as the world debates change, these men are already living it – one laundry load, one lunchbox and one act of quiet love at a time.

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



POTTU ON POINT
BY HASHINI KAVISHTRI

COMMENT by Ummu Nazra Nadzam

When schools no longer feel safe

RECENTLY, Malaysia was shaken by multiple grim incidents in school environments: including the fatal stabbing of a 16-year-old female student by a 14-year-old schoolmate in Petaling Jaya and the arrest of four teenage boys in Kedah for the alleged gang raping of a fellow student and the circulation of nude images.

These events expose not only failures in security and supervision but also deeper, quieter crises we are facing, particularly caused by fear, trauma, isolation, shame, and for many adolescents, the risk of spiralling into depression and self-harm.

As a clinical psychologist, I believe our response should go beyond tightening security measures. We must approach these issues with compassion, a thorough understanding of the underlying causes and a strong focus on prevention. Most importantly, we need to provide proactive and accessible mental health support, especially for our youths.

Hidden crisis

The mental health burden among Malaysian adolescents has long been under-recognised. Recent studies paint a troubling picture: approximately one in four Malaysian adolescents experience depression or depressive symptoms, with higher rates among girls.

A 2025 study published in *Archives of Public Health* reported that 25% of Malaysian adolescents experience depressive symptoms. Similarly, a nationwide study on dietary behaviour and depression found a 26.9% prevalence of adolescent depression.

Meanwhile, a Selangor-based study among 13 and 14-year-olds found that 19% of students experienced depressive symptoms, with girls

(26.3%) more affected than boys (11.7%).

Depression in teens is not just "sadness". It can manifest as persistent low mood; irritability; withdrawal from family, friends and society; too much sleeping or not sleeping at all; loss of interest or even self-harm.

If a child grows up feeling unsafe – whether it is from violence, betrayal or emotional neglect – or when a child goes through trauma without having their feelings truly seen, heard or held, especially in places that are supposed to be safe like schools, that pain doesn't just disappear; it transforms.

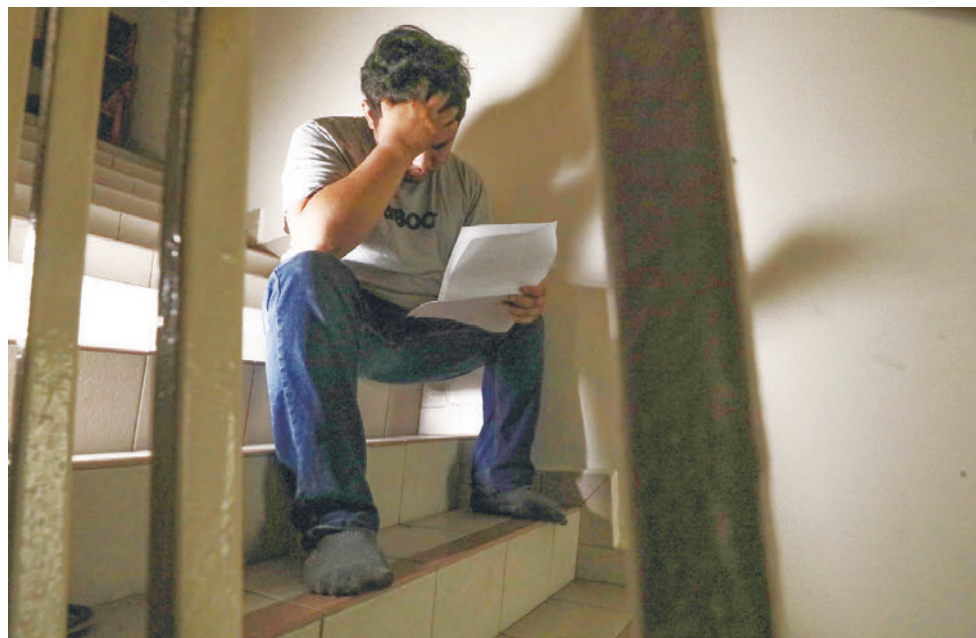
Without genuine emotional connection and support, the weight of that pain can grow heavier, increasing the risk of trauma and depression.

And when no one notices or steps in early, that quiet suffering can deepen into despair, shaping how they see themselves and the world around them.

Role of parents, guardians, community

Teenagers are in a period of rapid physical, emotional and psychosocial change. Parents and guardians should not be merely passive observers. Here are key strategies and red flags that parents, caregivers and educators should be alert to:

- ➔ **Know the warning signs** – sudden withdrawal, drop in grades, sleep disturbances, appetite changes or talk of self-harm.
- ➔ **Cultivate trust and open communication** – listen without judgement and create safe spaces for sharing.
- ➔ **Monitor social media and peer circles** – know the platforms they use and talk about consent and boundaries.
- ➔ **Encourage healthy routines** – sleep,



Schools and education authorities should strengthen mental health services and safe reporting mechanisms.
– **AMIRUL SYAFIQ THESUN**

nutrition, exercise and structure can buffer stress.

- ➔ **Build a safety net** – family time, mentors and professional help are crucial supports.
- ➔ **Seek professional help early** – if symptoms persist or intensify, consult a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Practical recommendations

- Crucial actions to prevent tragic incidents:
- ➔ Believing is single-handedly the most important thing.
- ➔ Gather evidence for better fact checking.
- ➔ Collaborate with teachers to create a safe and transparent environment.
- ➔ Introduce sex education to build awareness, respect and healthy boundaries.
- ➔ Recognise internal and external symptoms – children who do not feel safe will show it internally (sadness, excessive sleeping, loss of appetite, lack of motivation) or externally (aggression, refusing to go to school, bullying).
- ➔ Help parents, children and teachers to understand the legal components of cases involving sexual or violent conduct.

- ➔ Screen or remain vigilant over high-risk students who may be victims or perpetrators.
- ➔ Observe warning signs for both perpetrators and victims (emotional withdrawal, changes in behaviour or increased aggression)
- ➔ Ask questions, never assume, and avoid giving out unverified statements.
- ➔ Support victims, creating an environment that empowers them to report their cases safely and without fear.

Healing and restoring trust

- After traumatic events like rape or stabbing, the ripple effects in the school community are profound. Survivors, witnesses and even teachers may struggle with fear, guilt or anxiety.
- ➔ Trauma-focused therapy and counselling can help victims process pain.
- ➔ Group and peer sessions reduce isolation and promote resilience.
- ➔ Schools should provide psychosocial support and improve safety policies.
- ➔ Education on consent, empathy and boundaries must be integrated early.
- These heartbreaking incidents are red flags not only for policing and

security but for a national reckoning: Are our children safe – physically, emotionally and psychologically?

- As a clinical psychologist, I urge:
- ➔ Schools and education authorities to strengthen mental health services and safe reporting mechanisms.
- ➔ Parents and guardians to stay vigilant, compassionate and engaged.
- ➔ Policymakers to ensure sufficient funding for adolescent mental health programmes.
- ➔ Youths to know they are not alone; help is available and healing is possible.

If we act with urgency, empathy and coordination, we can transform silence and fear into safety and healing, and prevent further tragedies.

Ummu Nazra Nadzam is a clinical psychologist at Ampang Puteri Specialist Hospital. Her clinical focus includes trauma recovery, neurodevelopmental disorders, mood disorders and parenting support. She is passionate about building awareness on mental health literacy and promoting resilience in youths through compassion, education and early intervention. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com



Taste of Kerala

Curry pastes for easy cooking
- P20



WEEKLY FOCUS

MONDAY

Technology and social media

TUESDAY

Family and parenting

WEDNESDAY

Fashion and beauty

THURSDAY

Home and living

FRIDAY

Travel and leisure

SATURDAY

Food and beverage

SAVOUR the flavours of “God’s Own Country” Kerala with Kayra Cooking Series, featuring Roast Masala, Pollichatthu Masala and Biryani Masala, by the Michelin-Select restaurant Kayra Kerala Cuisine. This series comes after the first one, which were swept off the shelves.

The delicious efficiency of its time-tested sauces and pastes that go from stove-to-plate in just 10 minutes has been the reason for its popularity.

Kayra Kerala Cuisine was included its inclusion in the 2023, 2024 and 2025 edition of the Michelin Guide Kuala Lumpur & Penang, as part of the “Michelin Selected” list – and has been hailed a part of *Tatler Dining’s* “Top 20 Restaurants” for four consecutive years since 2021.

After six months of research and development, owner and third-generation Keralite-Malaysian Meriam Alfonso and executive chef Sal Sabeel has unveiled three of Kayra’s bestselling dishes: Moilee Curry, Kerala Fish Curry and Prawn Mango Curry, to debut the series in July.

Three months later, the sophomore series of Roast Masala, Pollichatthu Masala and Biryani Masala are now ready to be enjoyed.

All one has to do is follow



Kerala Fish Curry with Red Snapper Fillet.



Seafood Moilee.



Roast Gravy Masala, Biryani Masala and Seafood Pollichatthu Masala.



Meriam (left) and Sal.

Flavours of Kerala

➤ Kayra launches Roast Masala, Pollichatthu Masala, Biryani Masala for easy cooking

instructions to heat up the sauce, add water or coconut milk, protein and or vegetables – and serve!

The Kayra Cooking Series is also *halal*-certified and shelf stable for up to 12 months.

Retailing at RM20.00 each or RM55.00 for a bundle of three (in any combination), the series is available at selected Village Grocer outlets nationwide.

Born into a family with deep

culinary roots, Meriam’s formative years were spent growing up in her grandparents’ restaurant in Johor Bahru (founded in 1949).

That imprint of traditional Keralan cooking led her to establish Kayra Kerala Cuisine in Taman Tun Dr Ismail, KL in 2016, her keen sense of reinvention striking that fine balance between authenticity of flavours, with a modern sensibility.

A mere three years later, Meriam

and Sal’s partnership saw them expand to the upscale neighbourhood of Bangsar, where they quickly won over a new set of fans, building a loyal fanbase across the city, leading to their recognition in the “Michelin Selected” list for three consecutive years from 2023.

In January 2024, the seafood-focused Coast by Kayra opened in Starhill Gallery at the heart of Bukit Bintang, offering the familiar tastes of Kayra in a refined setting, with some Coast-only signatures and tasting menus highlighting the abundance of locally-sourced seafood in tantalising Keralan-style preparations.

TASTY RECIPE

CREAMY BUTTER PRAWNS

Find joy in cooking and wow your family and friends at the same time with this recipe! Crispy, golden buttered prawns coated in a rich, buttery sauce with a curry aroma and a hint of spice – this dish is a show-stopper for any celebration! Enjoy the rich flavours and learn the secrets of how to cook butter prawns Chinese style. Follow this detailed instructions for the best butter prawn recipe Chinese style, and make your celebrations memorable.

Serves: 4 persons

Ingredients

300g prawn
1 cup cornstarch
1l cooking oil

Marinade

1 tsp sugar
Salt (to taste)
3 clove garlic (grated)
2 tsp ginger (grated)
1 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp white pepper

2 tsp chicken powder
1 large egg
2 tbsp cornstarch

Creamy butter sauce

1 tbsp cooking oil
3 tbsp Emborg Unsalted Butter
3 clove garlic (chopped)
4 piece bird’s eye chillies (thinly sliced)
2 sprig curry leaves
0.5 tsp curry powder
200ml Emborg Cooking Cream
Sugar & salt (to taste)

Instructions

Prawns

1. Clean the prawns by removing the shell, tail and veins.
2. In a large bowl, mix the marinade ingredients and add the cleaned prawns. Stir well and let it marinate for 10 minutes.
3. Remove the prawns from the marinade and coat them with cornstarch.
4. In a large wok or pot, heat cooking oil until it reaches 180°C. Add the prawns and fry for 10 minutes, or until cooked through and golden brown.



Strain the prawns from the oil and set aside.

Creamy butter sauce

1. Melt Emborg Unsalted Butter with

cooking oil in a pan over low to medium heat. Add garlic, chillies and curry leaves.

2. Add curry powder and Emborg Cooking Cream, then stir to combine.

Season with salt and sugar.

3. Cook and stir until it starts to boil. Then add the prawns and toss.
4. Best served with rice.

OVER 24 home cooks from across Malaysia gathered at Ikea Cheras, Ikea Tebrau and Ikea Batu Kawan recently to battle it out in the Ultimate Cook-Off, as part of the month-long Ikea House Party celebration.

Contestants went head-to-head in timed rounds, judged by a panel of celebrity chefs, including Anis Nabilah, Ceddy, Qi Razali and Sean Lee alongside Ikea Malaysia's own chef and cooking experts. With energy, creativity and true home-cooking spirit, three teams rose above the rest.

The contestants were scored on creativity, teamwork, cooking technique and time management with judges assessing taste and presentation. Participants faced a series of culinary challenges: recreating the Ikea-inspired Sjurapport Eggs Benedict, reinventing the brand's iconic Swedish meatballs, then tackling a high-stakes Mystery Box challenge that blended Swedish and Malaysian flavours.

Each winning duo received a RM10,000 Ikea kitchen makeover, a transformation of their cooking space that turns dreams into everyday reality.

**Ikea Cheras
K1 & Friend - Aziatul Fasihah
Binti Mohd Roslan & Wan
Rogayah Wan Muhamad**

Once rivals in another cooking challenge, the duo joined forces at the Ikea Ultimate Cook-Off after one of them spotted the event poster and tagged the other to join. Their unlikely partnership quickly stood

Ultimate Cook-Off champions

➤ Winning teams secure RM10,000 kitchen makeovers in Ikea House Party competition



Home cooks taking part in the Ikea Ultimate Cook-Off.

out in the competition with their strong teamwork and genuine sense of fun. From transforming Ikea iconic meatballs into *satay lilit*, an Indonesian-inspired dish, to their final creation Bunga Kantan Pasta, their creativity and flavour balance wowed the judges. Their victory earned them the RM10,000 Ikea kitchen makeover, which they happily split evenly.

When asked about how they shared the prize, Aziatul laughed, saying: "That was the easy part! We both agreed right away to split it equally. The funny thing is, we

ended up wanting the same things for our homes, which is a kitchen island and new kitchen cabinets. It's like we're still in sync even after the competition. We can't wait to bring a little piece of Ikea into our kitchens."

**Ikea Tebrau
Cooking Pair - Linnox Ivan
Wilfred & Tamilmaaran Sinnaih**

A friendship forged in the kitchen, Linnox and Tamilmaaran have been cooking side by side for years. From small gatherings to wedding events serving over 200 guests, the duo teamed up once again for the Ikea Ultimate Cook-Off, bringing their signature teamwork and shared passion for food to the competition floor.

Their final dish Pan-Fried Herb-Crusted Salmon impressed the judges with its balance of Swedish and local flavours. But what truly stood out was their friendship. When they were announced as winners, Tamilmaaran insisted that Linnox take the entire RM10,000 kitchen makeover for his new home.

When asked about the decision, Linnox shared: "I just got the keys to my new home recently, and honestly, I wasn't planning to start



The winners at Ikea Batu Kawan: Pearly Lim Pei Li (second from left) and Teh Boon Soon (centre).



The winners at Ikea Tebrau: Tamilmaaran Sinnaih (left) and Linnox Ivan.

renovations anytime soon. So I was really grateful when Tamil said he wanted me to have the full prize. We both agreed that the next time there's a competition, it'll be his turn to take home the prize."

**Ikea Batu Kawan
Soup-ernatural Flavour Chasers -
Pearly Lim Pei Li & Teh Boon
Soon**

The husband-and-wife team charmed the judges and audience with their wit, teamwork and creativity. Competing under the name Soup-ernatural Flavour Chasers, inspired by their shared love for making soups at home, the couple set the stage ablaze with two inventive fusion dishes that combined Swedish staples with

local favourites.

In the semi-finals, they prepared Swedish Meatballs with Satay Sauce and Potato Croquettes, while in the finals, they wowed the judges with a pan-seared salmon served with *asam pedas*-inspired sauce, featuring Ikea signature lingonberry jam for a subtle sweet finish.

When asked about the experience, Pearly shared: "We didn't expect to win at all. We came up with our name because we only ever cook soups at home! But this competition really pushed us out of our comfort zone. From using lingonberry in *asam pedas* to frying salmon for the first time, it was a wild ride. Now, we can finally build the kitchen we've always dreamed of.



The winners at Ikea Cheras: Aziatul Fasihah and Wan Rogayah.

PFAS-free non-stick coating promises leap forward in durability

GREENPAN, a PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances)-free ceramic non-stick cookware, has unveiled Thermolon 9G, the brand's most advanced PFAS-free ceramic non-stick coating to date, representing a leap forward in durability, performance and safety.

Since launching in 2007, GreenPan has revolutionised home cooking by introducing Thermolon, a safe alternative to traditional non-stick coatings which are often laden with harmful chemicals such as PFAS, PFOA, lead and cadmium. With a commitment to consumer safety from day one, GreenPan has developed innovative cookware that combines performance, convenience and aesthetics without compromising on health and safety.

PFAS are a group of over 10,000 man-made chemicals known for their water, dirt and oil-repellent properties, often found in non-stick pans and various consumer products. These substances have



Thermolon 9G is Greenpan's most advanced PFAS-free ceramic non-stick coating to date.

raised concerns due to their detrimental effects on health and the environment.

Thermolon is made from a derivative of sand and infused with layers of diamond particles, enhancing heat conductivity and durability. This innovative coating

ensures a worry-free cooking experience, as no toxic fumes are released even if accidentally overheated. Developed in-house, it has continuously improved Thermolon since its inception, leading to the latest generation - Thermolon 9G.

Designed with the modern consumer in mind, this advanced coating combines resistance to wear and abrasion, ensuring a product lifespan that is 10 times longer when compared to the original Thermolon.

Thermolon 9G's coating is

PFAS-free and meets strict international food contact safety standards, including FDA 21 CFR 175.300, EU Framework Regulation 1935/2004/EC and LFGB Sections 30 & 31.

In addition, Thermolon remains the only ceramic non-stick coating to have received NSF/ANSI 51 certification. This certification requires rigorous toxicological assessments as well as audits of manufacturing facilities, reaffirming consumer safety and product quality. In a market filled with confusing labels and claims, GreenPan is delivering peace of mind to consumers.

Thermolon 9G represents more than just an upgrade. It is a significant leap forward in PFAS-free ceramic non-stick technology. The Cookware Company has mastered the integration of additional coating layers, fusing them for ultimate non-stick performance and unbelievable durability.

THE last three years have been the toughest for Xie Dandan and her family during more than a decade cultivating one of China's most esteemed culinary delicacies, the "hairy crab", named for its furry claws.

"From 2022, it feels like the weather has been getting worse every year," said the 34-year-old, standing amid tanks filled with the crabs, coveted for their sweet flesh and golden roe, while she wrapped some in straw to prepare them for customers.

"We've come to mentally prepare for these losses."

Xie is among the farmers at Yangcheng Lake in the eastern province of Jiangsu being forced to devise new ways to keep the crustaceans alive as unusually high temperatures and longer-than-expected summers have disrupted breeding cycles since 2022.

The Chinese mitten crabs, as they are also known, can sell for hundreds of dollars when exported in sets of four to countries such as Singapore and Japan.

"Those who work in agriculture are at the mercy of the sky," said Xie, whose community reeled last year from losses caused by the strongest typhoon to hit the east coast since 1949, ripping out nets and shutting down oxygenation systems.

Higher temperatures than usual spell a triple threat for the crabs by slowing their growth, reducing the amount of oxygen in the water and boosting growth of bacteria, said Kenneth Leung, a marine environment expert at the City University of Hong Kong.

Hopes for a bumper harvest this year were crushed by summer temperatures around the lake in Suzhou city famed for some of the tastiest crabs, which stayed above 30°C until late October, delaying their maturity.

The labour-intensive cultivation of the crabs begins with farmers growing their larvae in ponds for about a year before they are moved to fenced farms within the lake for the creatures to molt, or shed their outer shells, as they grow.

Molting happens about five times between March and the traditional end-September start of the harvest, Xie said.

But stronger heat can kill crabs as they shed their shells, in addition to the delay in maturity caused by longer summers. In 2022, farmers dumped blocks of ice into the water to cool it, Xie said.

Some of eastern China's hottest and longest summers in the last three years have brought temperatures of 40°C or higher on

China's heatwaves threaten supply of delicious 'hairy crabs'

➤ Higher temperatures, longer summers inhibit growth of crustaceans



Steamed hairy crabs sit on a plate in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, China.



Farmer Tie Dandan uses a net to display hairy crabs from a tank.



The crabs are coveted for their sweet flesh and golden roe. — PICS FROM REUTERS



Hairy crabs being prepared for packing at Suzhou Fishery Aquatic Products Co., Ltd.

consecutive days as early as July.

In September, weather officials said this year's summer was China's hottest since 1961, while northern rains were the longest in the same period, bringing disruptions that scientists have linked to climate change.

Leung suggested selective breeding as a possible solution, by choosing crabs with a greater tolerance of higher temperatures for breeding.

Authorities expect the lake to yield a

harvest of 10,350 metric tons this year, roughly in line with previous years' figures, except for 9,900 tons last year, when the typhoon hit.

While crab farmers may pray for better weather next year, they know they ultimately have little control, Xie added.

"We only can see whether the hairy crabs will be able to adapt, and if they can't, then maybe this industry will just be eliminated. We can't do anything about it." — Reuters

With tariffs, record potato harvest no boon in fries-mad Belgium

FRIES powerhouse Belgium is in for a record potato harvest this year – but that is hardly cause for celebration for farmers who face a slump in prices partially driven by a crunch in exports.

With almost all potatoes plucked from the ground, the European nation is set to produce about five million tonnes of the tubers, up 11% on 2024 and just short of half a tonne per inhabitant, according to farming group Belpotato.

The milestone comes on the back of a steady rise in potato-farmed land fuelled by the country's world-beating frozen fries industry, which is now feeling the pinch of US tariffs and growing competition from Asia.

"We are at a tipping point. Global markets have been buying fewer European fries," Belpotato's secretary Pierre Lebrun said.

Fried potatoes are a national dish and symbol of pride in Belgium.

Dotted by "friteries" or "frituren" – diners specialising in the stuff with names such as Fritapapa and Frit'city – the country has turned its taste for fried sticks into a huge commercial success.

The industry has expanded rapidly over the past decade, and Belgium is currently Europe's biggest producer and the world's largest peddler of what the British call chips.

In 2024, the country exported more than €3 billion euros (RM14.5 billion) worth of cooked and



An employee of an agricultural cooperative checks the quality of potatoes after their harvesting in Geer, eastern Belgium.



An employee of an agricultural cooperative sorts potatoes. — PICS FROM AFP

frozen potato products, a three-fold increase on 2015, according to European Union data agency Eurostat.

A steady global appetite and a fast-food boom in Asia and the Middle East have spurred investments, said Christophe Vermeulen, the head of trade group CEO Belgapom.

"As a commodity, fries are always very popular. When the population grows and the middle class grows, the demand for fries grows as well. And obviously every time something fast food-ish opens in the world, they need fries," said Vermeulen.

'Reset mode'

As factories sought to churn out more and more fries, potato prices reached a historic high over the past couple of years – spurring a farming craze.

Farmers bought more land or rented it out from neighbours to plant potatoes, said Lebrun.

Producers in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Germany, which also supply Belgian fries manufacturers, added 40,000 hectares to their plots this year, a 7% increase on 2024, according to industry figures.

A similar hike was recorded the

previous year.

It seemed "the sky was the limit", Lebrun said. But the situation has now come to a head.

Frozen fries-makers – who eat up the lion's share of Belgian potatoes – have been hit by a triple whammy of import tariffs in key market the US, a strong euro hurting exports and the emergence of rivals in India, China and Egypt, said Vermeulen.

Frozen fries exports were down 6.1% in the year ending June 30, industry figures show.

Most potatoes are sold through seasonal contracts agreed before the harvest. On the so-called free market however – where the remainder are sold – record production has sent prices crashing to about 15 euros a tonne.

That is down from the peak they hit last year of about 600 euros.

"It's going to be a difficult year," Baudouin Dewulf, a grizzled farmer in Geer, eastern Belgium, said. He lamented the "saturated market" as a harvester loaded an avalanche of potatoes onto a truck in a field behind him.

While seasonal contracts with fries manufacturers are protecting the income of many farmers, some will have to rethink their investments and brace for tough negotiations next year.

"The Belgian potato industry is in a reset mode," said Vermeulen. — AFP



The album's cover is Carpenter's most controversial to date.



Carpenter sings about her dating experiences in *Man's Best Friend*.



Man's Best Friend is at its best with its upbeat tracks.

ALBUM REVIEW

BY JOHN TAN

LAST year may have seen the rise of various new artistes, but its main star was arguably Sabrina Carpenter. With the release of *Short N Sweet*, the five-foot pop star dominated airwaves, winning over listeners with *Espresso*, *Taste* and *Please Please Please*.

Cheeky and risqué in nature, the offerings shot her to pop stardom after years of stagnation. A year has since passed and Carpenter returns with her seventh album *Man's Best Friend*. The release, as expected, has achieved commercial success.

The 26-year-old earned her second number one worldwide album, marking a career best for Carpenter. But the feat came with a new level of scrutiny for the songstress.

Capitalising controversy

The album's cover alone drew criticism as Carpenter is seen kneeling on all fours with a sensual expression, while a man grabs her hair. Though she claims it to be feministic, others saw it as degrading to women as a whole.

Regardless of the differing opinions, the cover initiated a conversation for Carpenter. If anything, it showcases her wit as an artiste, proving there is depth and intention behind all the cheekiness and sensuality.

Carpenter is clearly opting for shock value, provoking for the sake of

Desanitising pop

➤ Sabrina Carpenter blends genres with mixed results



Man's Best Friend is Carpenter's seventh studio album. – PICS FROM INSTAGRAM @SABRINA CARPENTER

provocation, poking fun at certain troupes' hypocritical views on dating and relationships.

Leave the blues away

The album's production emulates this approach too. Carpenter does not hold her tongue back, as she

sings openly about her encounters with men and their immature behaviours – from the lead single *Manchild* to the closing track *Goodbye*.

Standouts include *Manchild*, *House Tour* and *Nobody's Son*. The tracks' production and lyrical value

are what one can expect from a high-profile pop star such as Carpenter – infectious, engaging and memorable.

The album's ballads, however, were a bit of a disappointment. While it is wise of Carpenter to showcase range, ballads such as *Sugar Talking*

and *Don't Worry I'll Make You Worry* do nothing for her artistry.

Unlike her previous ballads, such as *Because I liked a Boy* and *Already Over*, the ballads on the album lack soul and complexity. Most listeners will forget the song as soon as it reaches its outro.

Stick to one genre

Carpenter's blending of genre on the album is to blame here. Similar to *Short N Sweet*, the songstress decided to experiment with pop, disco pop and country, infusing the genres throughout the 12 tracks.

With *Manchild* and *Go Go Juice*, Carpenter samples her love for country. In *Tears* and *When Did You Get Hot?*, she borrows influence from disco pop. Her decision to explore is admirable, yet it seems to have worked against her again.

With the exception of *Manchild*, Carpenter's country samples seem inauthentic and out of place. Whereas, her pop pursuits fit her just right, complementing her voice, sarcasm and cheeky persona.

Return to pop

Hopefully, Carpenter realises this soon enough. After all, she is known for her "poppier" and upbeat offerings. It will be a waste if Carpenter refuses to fully lean into this musical direction.

Man's Best Friend may have brought in the numbers, but the effort falls short in comparison to her previous projects musically. Carpenter may want to revisit her past projects, as she may just learn a thing or two from them.

Rock band Radwimps reveals music video for *Hitsu Zetsu* from album *Anew*

JAPANESE rock band Radwimps has released the new music video for *Hitsu Zetsu* from its chart-topping new album *Anew*, out now worldwide.

With its raw and heartfelt lyrics, the song has been generating buzz since the release of Radwimps's new album. The music video, directed by Michihito Fujii, features actress Suzu Hirose, whose subtle yet powerful expressions beautifully capture the song's emotional depth. Her performance, paired with the band's

impassioned delivery, results in a cinematic, documentary-like piece that tenderly embraces the emotions of those living in the present moment. Fujii and Radwimps previously collaborated on the 2022 film *The Last 10 Years*, strengthening the creative chemistry that shines through in this latest project.

Anew features a total of 12 tracks – 10 new recordings alongside previously released songs *Tamamono* (theme song for NHK's drama serial *Anpan*) and

Meidai (theme song for NTV's news programme *News Zero*). The physical album includes an exclusive bonus track, *Tamamono (Orchestra Version)*, while the digital edition features a re-recorded *Dai-Dan-En feat. Zorn (Anew Version)*.

The band will release a 20th anniversary tribute album *Dear Jubilee -Radwimps Tribute-* on Nov 19. The album will feature a total of 14 tracks, with details on participating artistes and song selections to be revealed soon.



Radwimps continues to see strong streaming numbers in the region with Indonesia (second), the Philippines (fourth), Thailand (sixth), Taiwan (seventh) and Malaysia (ninth) among its top global audience.

South Korean boy band Treasure returns to KL in May 2026

SOUTH KOREAN boy group Treasure is set to make its return to Kuala Lumpur with its 2025-26 Treasure Tour [Pulse On] in Kuala Lumpur.

The group will be bringing its powerful performances, dazzling visuals and unstoppable energy to Axiata Arena on May 30, 2026.

Treasure has rapidly gained international recognition with its stage presence and chart-topping hits such as *Jikjik*, *Darari*, *Hello* and *Bona Bona*.

Known for its stunning choreography and high-energy performances, the 10-member group – consisting of Choi Hyun Suk, Jihoon, Yoshi, Junkyu, Yoon Jae Hyuk, Asahi, Doyoung, Haruto, Park Jeong Woo and So Jung Hwan – continues to captivate audiences around the world with their distinctive sound and charisma.

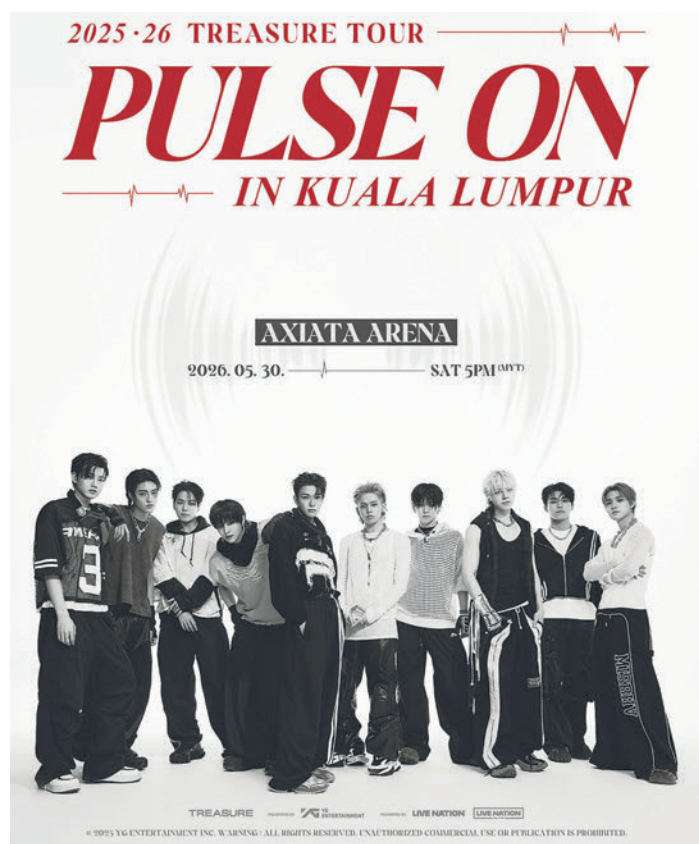
The band has released four

albums in the [*The First Step*] series, including its debut single. With this series of albums, the band has accumulated more than one million copies in sales, sweeping the Rookie of the Year awards at major music awards in Korea, making them the best K-pop rookie of 2020.

Building on this growth, Treasure released its first mini-album [*The Second Step: Chapter One*] in 2022. It topped major global music charts and doubled the achievements of its previous releases in terms of album sales, YouTube metrics and other key indicators.

Its second studio album [*Reboot*], released in July 2023, sold an impressive 1.71 million copies, becoming its first million-seller for a single album.

Fans in Kuala Lumpur can look forward to a spectacular production and interactive moments.



Known for stunning choreography and high-energy performances, Treasure consists of 10 members.

CRITICALLY acclaimed comedian Sheng Wang is set to perform in Kuala Lumpur on Jan 9, 2026 at the HXC Grand Ballroom, United Point Mall, as part of his Asia Tour 2026.

The one-night-only show promises an evening of clever, laid-back and original stand-up comedy from one of America's most exciting voices.

Born in Taipei, Taiwan, and raised in Houston, Wang has cultivated a devoted following for his cool-as-cucumber stage presence and razor-sharp observational humour.

He is best known for his 2022

Netflix special *Sweet & Juicy*, which was notably produced and directed by comedy powerhouse Ali Wong. The special became a viral sensation, lauded by critics for its masterclass in comedic minimalism and Zen-like delivery.

Wang's style is a departure from the loud and controversial: he is a comedian who finds profound, universal hilarity in the mundane, deftly dissecting subjects such as the logistics of buying neck pillows, the confusing geometry of grocery carts and the simple pleasures of self-care.

His smooth, unhurried delivery and insightful material have earned

comparisons to comedy icon Mitch Hedberg, marking him as a unique voice in modern comedy. His jokes sneak up on the audience, delivering insights that make you laugh first and ponder the human condition later.

Wang is also a proven talent behind the scenes, having been a staff writer for the hit ABC sitcom *Fresh Off the Boat* (from 2015-2018) further cementing his reputation as a craftsman of comedic narrative.

Praised by his peers and global fans alike as a "breath of fresh air, brilliant in its simplicity", this performance marks Wang's showcase show in Malaysia. The Kuala Lumpur

date is a stop on a global tour that has already garnered rave reviews across the US and Asia for its unique blend of charm and cleverness.

Attendees can expect a brilliant night of storytelling and impeccable timing that feels as easy as conversation, and as funny as the best comedy has to offer. With his chill vibes and razor-sharp observations, Wang is set to have KL's audience questioning their own life choices – in the funniest way possible.

Presented by BOHM Presents and live entertainment promoter LOL Asia, tickets prices for the show start from RM138 onwards.



Wang will perform a one-night-only showcase in comedic minimalism.

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Papa Zola The Movie is set for a Dec 11 release.

Monsta stomping with animation line-up

Local firm finds regional success

MALAYSIAN animated series *BoBoiBoy Galaxy Baraju* once again takes the number one spot on Netflix's Top 10 TV Shows in Malaysia and Indonesia, just days after the release of its first two episodes on Oct 18.

By achieving this, it pushed down several popular K-dramas and anime titles that usually dominate the streaming charts.

In a statement, Monsta said the

series also ranked number one in Netflix's Top Kids TV Shows category in Singapore and Vietnam, further proving its growing regional appeal across Southeast Asia.

"The first two episodes of *BoBoiBoy Galaxy Baraju* have already recorded over 20 million views across various social media platforms, proving BoBoiBoy remains a pop culture powerhouse and one of Southeast Asia's most beloved heroes.

"Fans from Malaysia and abroad praised the animation's Hollywood-level visual quality and the storyline that stays engaging and true to its roots," the statement said.

Meanwhile, Monsta media director Faiz Zainal Aabidin said:

"Another great news, *BoBoiBoy Galaxy Baraju* will soon reach fans in Vietnam and India with localised dubbed versions."

Under the #MonstaHypeTrain movement, Monsta aims to sustain the animation momentum with the upcoming release of *Papa Zola The Movie* on Dec 11, where the beloved side character Papa Zola takes the spotlight. BoBoiBoy himself will make a supporting appearance in the film.

Following the success of *Mechamato* season 4 and the arrival of *BoBoiBoy Galaxy Baraju*, *Papa Zola The Movie* is set to be the highlight of Monsta's animation line-up this year. – Bernama

Sheng Wang to bring masterclass in observational humour to Malaysia

G-DRAGON brings his concert to silver screen

➤ Artiste mesmerises with long-awaited return

BY AMEEN HAZIZI

G-DRAGON'S *G-Dragon In Cinema: Ubermensch* is a vivid mix of performance and introspection that captures his long-awaited return to the stage. More than a concert film, it serves as a reflection of who he is now as a performer, and as a person rebuilding his creative identity after a decade away.

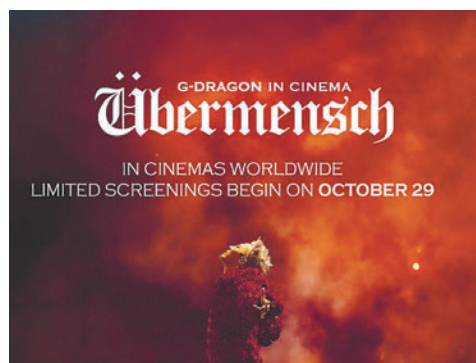
From the opening scene, G-Dragon takes command of the screen with striking precision and confidence. The performances are grand and visually layered, blending choreography, lighting and cinematic framing that highlight his control over every moment.

Between songs, he pauses to share personal reflections about his journey and the philosophy behind the tour's title. He



Every beat, every breath, every moment that will redefine his legacy bursts onto the big screen.

– PICS FROM G-DRAGON WEBSITE



After eight years, the icon of a generation roars back with an epic world tour: Ubermensch.

explained Ubermensch means a person who does not give up, even when they stumble – a belief that threads through the entire show.

Musically, *Ubermensch* moves effortlessly across styles. G-Dragon weaves hip hop, pop and funk with moments of eerie, horror-inspired visuals that expand his creative range. Each transition feels purposeful, creating a rhythm that mirrors the chaos and calm of his evolution as an artiste.

Fans are treated to a full showcase of his career, with the crowd singing and dancing along to every track. The biggest surprise came when the remaining members of BigBang join him on stage for a heartfelt reunion, adding a surge of emotion that turns

the concert into something unforgettable.

The 4DX presentation enhances the experience beyond what a standard concert film could deliver. The expanded visuals revealed the entire stage, from the live band and backup dancers to the immersive light projections that ripple through each song. Every sound, flash and vibration pulls the viewer closer into the performance.

Every moment of *G-Dragon In Cinema: Ubermensch* feels purposeful and finely executed. It stands as a visual experience and a creative reflection, showcasing his resilience, reinvention and the way music continues to bridge the space between artiste and audience.

Apec spotlights K-pop's impact

AS Gyeongju puts the final touches to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Economic Leaders' Meeting (AELM) yesterday, the host country is brilliantly using its K-pop culture to promote its uniqueness and appeal.

This effort is highlighted through G-Dragon, the popular BigBang group leader, and the phenomenal global success of *KPop Demon Hunters*. G-Dragon or Kwon Ji-Yong, also known as the "King of K-pop", is famously known for his insane talents as a singer, songwriter, music producer and fashion icon – and has garnered fans around the world.

Funnily enough, it even sparked rumours that the biggest K-pop star and rapper would give a free concert in conjunction with the summit. However, G-Dragon, who is also the Apec honorary ambassador, was one of the guests at the summit dinner.

G-Dragon has played his part through the Apec promotional video, which also features South Korean President Lee Jae Myung in a cameo role, that has been shown on various broadcast and online channels.

Apart from that, pastries, snacks and ice-cream with packaging featuring Rumi, Zoey, Mira, Saja Boys and Derpy the Tiger – characters from the animated movie *KPop Demon Hunters* – were among the items served at the International Media Centre in the Gyeongju Hwabaek International Convention Centre and at booths around the the area where the summit was held.

Interestingly, Gyeongju, which is in a coastal area, is also a favourite shooting location for drama and films, especially historical drama series such as *The Great Queen Seondeok* and *Mr Sunshine*, as well as modern television series such as *Princess Hours* and *Beauty Inside*, which showcase the area's beauty as well as historic and cinematic landscape.

Gyeongju, the fifth-largest city in South Korea, is nicknamed the "Museum Without Walls" and is home to numerous historical sites, some of which have been designated as Unesco World Heritage Sites for their significance rooted in the city's past as the capital of the Silla Kingdom, which ruled a unified Korean peninsula for nearly a thousand years.

Physiotherapist Park Hyun, 26, said the selection of Gyeongju as the venue for this year's Apec is a good opportunity to promote the city.

"I have come here a few times for leisure, and this is the first time I've come here for work. There has been a lot of development.

"I am glad Gyeongju has been chosen this time as a lot of foreign tourists are only aware of Jeju but not Gyeongju," said Park Hyun, who hails from Seoul.

This year marks 20 years since the republic last hosted the AELM in Busan in 2005. – Bernama

Court rules against girl group NewJeans in label dispute

A South Korean court ruled on Thursday against popular K-pop group NewJeans, whose members had sought to cut contractual ties with its label Ador over what the group called "mistreatment" by the agency.

The five-member girl group made headlines in November by announcing the decision to leave Ador, whose parent company Hybe is also behind K-pop sensation BTS.

The label then filed for an injunction, requesting the court to prohibit the group's members from engaging in independent commercial activities and allowing it to remain NewJeans's managing agency.

The Seoul Central District Court in Thursday's decision, its second in favour of Ador, rejected NewJeans's claims that mistreatment had led to the "irreparable breakdown of trust".

"The court accepted all positions of the agency, keeping its contract with the group valid," a court representative said.

The court had already accepted Ador's initial injunction request in March to prohibit the group from seeking outside opportunities without the label's consents while legal proceedings took place.

"The level of trust between Ador and NewJeans cannot be considered so damaged as to justify terminating the exclusive contract," the court said in Thursday's verdict, according to Yonhap news agency.

NewJeans is among Hybe's most successful acts since the band made its debut in 2022.

The heated contractual dispute flared up



Following the court's ruling, Ador has announced that NewJeans is prepared for the release of a new album. – AFPIC

last year after allegations that Hybe forced out the band's star producer Min Hee-jin from her role as CEO of Ador.

Its members then issued an ultimatum demanding Min's reinstatement, which Hybe declined. In response, the members took their grievances public, accusing the label of intentionally sabotaging their careers.

Band member Hanni alleged last year that the group experienced workplace harassment, such as "deliberate miscommunications and manipulation"

while working with Ador.

The court said there was "no provision in the contract requiring Min, the former CEO, to necessarily head Ador".

Ador welcomed the decision and urged the group members to resume their work with the label.

"We sincerely hope today's judgement... will serve as an opportunity for the artistes to calmly reflect on this matter," it said, adding it had already prepared for the release of a new NewJeans album. – AFP



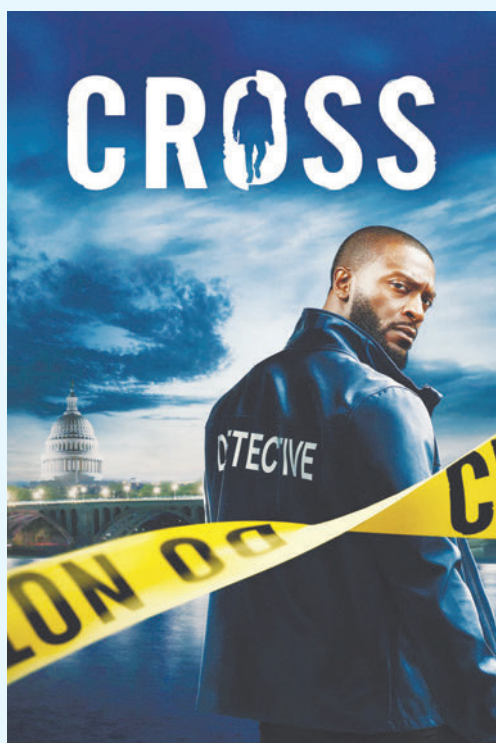
G-Dragon has been appointed as Apec's honorary ambassador. – PIC FROM X @GDRAGON'SBUTTERFLYFANACCOUNT

BINGE-WORTHY FLICKS



F1 The Movie
Cast: Brad Pitt, Damson Idris, Javier Bardem, Kerry Condon, Tobias Menzies, Kim Bodnia

From director Joseph Kosinski and producer Jerry Bruckheimer, *F1 The Movie* makes its global streaming debut on Apple TV on Dec 12, following a record-breaking theatrical run. The film stars Brad Pitt as Sonny Hayes, a former Formula One prodigy whose career was cut short by a tragic accident. Decades later, he is pulled back into the racing world by his old teammate Ruben Cervantes (Javier Bardem) to help save a struggling team and mentor rising star Joshua Pearce (Damson Idris). Filmed during real Grand Prix events, the film captures the intensity, rivalry and redemption at the heart of professional racing. Backed by a chart-topping soundtrack and praised for its authenticity, *F1 The Movie* has become the highest-grossing sports film of all time and a global cultural phenomenon.



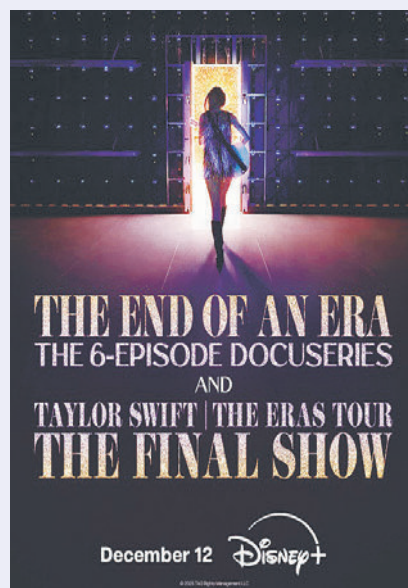
Cross (Season two)
Cast: Aldis Hodge, Matthew Lillard, Jeanine Mason, Wes Chatham, Isaiah Mustafa, Alona Tal, Samantha Walkes, Juanita Jennings, Caleb Elijah, Melody Hurd, Johnny Ray Gill

The hit crime thriller *Cross*, based on James Patterson's bestselling *Alex Cross* novels, returns for a gripping second season on Prime Video. Aldis Hodge reprises his role as Alex Cross, a brilliant detective and forensic psychologist renowned for his ability to understand the minds of killers. This season, Cross faces one of his most complex cases yet as he pursues a ruthless vigilante targeting corrupt billionaires, blurring the line between justice and vengeance. The eight-episode series premieres globally on Feb 11, 2026, with the first three episodes streaming immediately and new episodes released weekly until the finale on Mar 18.



The Family Plan 2
Cast: Mark Wahlberg, Michelle Monaghan, Zoe Colletti, Van Crosby

The Morgan family returns in the sequel to *The Family Plan*, the hit Apple Original Film. Mark Wahlberg reprises his role as Dan Morgan, with Michelle Monaghan, Zoe Colletti and Van Crosby also returning to star. Directed once again by Simon Cellan Jones, the new action-comedy follows the Morgans on a Christmas holiday across Europe that takes an unexpected turn when Dan's past comes back to haunt them. Written by David Coggeshall, the sequel promises more high-stakes chaos, heartfelt family moments and holiday adventure. Produced by Apple Original Films and Skydance Media, the film continues the story of a family that proves spy life and parenting can be an unpredictable mix.



Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour - The End of an Era

Cast: Taylor Swift, Gracie Abrams, Sabrina Carpenter, Ed Sheeran, Florence Welch

The 14-time Grammy-winning artist Taylor Swift returns to Disney+ with a six-part docuseries that offers an intimate look at her record-breaking *Eras Tour*. *The End of an Era* chronicles the creative process, challenges and global impact of one of the biggest concert tours in history, featuring appearances by friends and collaborators. The first two episodes premiere on Dec 12, with new episodes released weekly.



Drops of God (Season two)
Cast: Fleur Geffrier, Tomohisa Yamashita

The International Emmy Award-winning French-Japanese drama *Drops of God* returns for a new season on Apple TV+, premiering Jan 21, 2026. Adapted from the New York Times bestselling manga, the eight-episode series continues the story of Camille and Issei as they face their greatest challenge yet to uncover the origin of the world's most extraordinary wine, a mystery that even their late father could not solve. What begins as a pursuit of legacy becomes a globe-spanning quest for truth, testing family bonds and revealing secrets hidden for generations. New episodes will stream weekly until Mar 11, 2026.



The Buccaneers (Season three)
Cast: Kristine Froseth, Alisha Boe, Josie Totah, Aubri Ibrag, Imogen Waterhouse, Christina Hendricks, Mia Threapleton, Leighton Meester

The acclaimed Apple TV+ period drama *The Buccaneers* returns for a third season, continuing its modern reimagining of Edith Wharton's unfinished final novel. Following the lives of bold young American women who shook up the rigid world of 1870s London society, the new season finds the Buccaneers determined to take control of their destinies. Love, ambition and rebellion intertwine as they face new challenges and a mysterious Duke who threatens to upend the balance at Tintagel. Produced by The Forge Entertainment, the third season promises more romance, scandal and spirited defiance. Seasons one and two are now streaming on Apple TV+.



Pluribus (Season one)
Cast: Rhea Seehorn, Karolina Wydra, Carlos Manuel Vesga, Miriam Shor, Samba Schutte

From *Breaking Bad* creator Vince Gilligan, *Pluribus* is a new science fiction drama premiering globally on Apple TV+ on Nov 7. The nine-episode series stars Emmy Award nominee Rhea Seehorn as the most miserable person on Earth, who unexpectedly becomes humanity's last hope in a world overtaken by enforced happiness. Blending dark humour and emotional depth, the series explores what it truly means to feel in a society obsessed with bliss. The first two episodes debut on launch day, followed by new episodes every Friday until Dec 26.



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322 **Notices**

2026 Secondary School Scholarship.

The Selangor And Kuala Lumpur Teo Chew Association Scholarship Fund Committee. Members of this Association with over a year standing and other Malaysians whose children are at present studying in a secondary school in the state of Selangor or Kuala Lumpur may apply to the committee for scholarship for their children. Scholarship is awarded according to rules and regulations set by the scholarship fund committee. This application is opened from 01-11-2025 to 01-12-2025. Duly completed application forms together with relevant documents must be submitted to the committee on or before 01-12-2025. Any late application will not be entertained. Application forms are obtainable from the Secretariat of The Selangor and Kuala Lumpur Teo Chew Association Scholarship Fund Committee at Level 14, Menara Teo Chew, No. 1, Jalan Lumut, 50400 Kuala Lumpur.

2026 Pre-University/ Diploma/University Scholarship.

The Selangor And Kuala Lumpur Teo Chew Association Scholarship Fund Committee Members of this Association (other than members of this committee) & other children of poor Malaysian families who have fulfilled entry Qualifications to local or overseas universities/colleges of Higher learning & currently pursuing courses in such universities, colleges but not enjoying any scholarship from other institutions, may apply to the committee for the above scholarship. Application forms are obtainable from the Secretariat of The Selangor and Kuala Lumpur Teo Chew Association Scholarship Fund Committee, at Level 14, Menara Teo Chew, No. 1, Jalan Lumut, 50400 Kuala Lumpur & completed forms together with relevant documents must be submitted to the above address on or before 1st December 2025. Any late application will not be entertained.

322 **Notices**

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SHORTS

Record-breaking India reach World Cup final

JEMIMAH RODRIGUES hit an unbeaten 127 as INDIA pulled off a record chase of 339 against Australia on Thursday to set up a World Cup final against South Africa.

Rodrigues and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who hit 89, put on 167 runs for the third wicket as India won with nine balls and five wickets to spare at DY Patil Stadium, on the outskirts of Mumbai.

The hosts finished on a total of 341-5 in reply to Australia's impressive 338 and ensured there will be a new name on the 50-over trophy on Sunday.

Amanjot Kaur hit the winning boundary but not enjoying any scholarship from other institutions, may apply to the committee for the above scholarship. Application forms are obtainable from the Secretariat of The Selangor and Kuala Lumpur Teo Chew Association Scholarship Fund Committee, at Level 14, Menara Teo Chew, No. 1, Jalan Lumut, 50400 Kuala Lumpur & completed forms together with relevant documents must be submitted to the above address on or before 1st December 2025. Any late application will not be entertained.

"Firstly, I want to thank God, because I couldn't do this on my own. I know he carried me through today," said player-of-the-match Rodrigues.

"It was really hard these last four months, but it just feels like a dream and it's not sunk in yet.

"Towards the end, I was just quoting a scripture from the Bible - to just stand still and that God will fight for me. I just stood there and he fought for me."

India have twice been World Cup runners-up, in 2005 and 2017.

The hosts topped Australia's 331-7 against India earlier in the current tournament - which was itself a new record chase for a women's one-day international.

India appeared to be in deep trouble at 59-2 in the 10th over with Shafali Verma (10) and star batter Smriti Mandhana (24) dismissed.

But Rodrigues and Harmanpreet rode out the storm and then took the

attack to the opposition in front of a sizeable, partisan crowd.

Harmanpreet said she did not "have words to express myself"

"Feeling great, we've been working for so many years," she said.

"It's an amazing feeling."

We let ourselves down, says Aussie skipper

STUNNED captain Alyssa Healy (pic) says Australia let themselves down after their reign as one-day world champions was brought to a shuddering halt by hosts India.

The world's most dominant side put together an imposing 338 in their semifinal in Mumbai on Thursday, with the odds heavily in favour of them winning.

But fielding mistakes coupled with Jemimah Rodrigues's glorious unbeaten 127 saw India pull off a record chase to set up a final against South Africa.

"Just disappointed," said Healy. "Ultimately we just weren't sharp enough in all three facets to give ourselves the opportunity to win that semifinal.

"Not taking anything away from the Indian performance, (but) there's an element of we let ourselves down."

It was seven-time champions Australia's first loss in the ODI World Cup since 2017, when India beat them in the semifinal.

The defeat also revived bitter memories of being knocked out at the same stage of the Twenty20 World Cup last year as three-time defending champions.

Wicketkeeper Healy, playing at her last ODI World Cup, admitted they failed to capitalise on their opportunities with a key moment coming when she dropped Rodrigues on 82. Tahlia McGrath then repeated the blunder on 106.

"It feels a little bit un-Australian to not be as clinical as we normally are, and knowing how well we played at this World Cup," said Healy.



India celebrate their win after the Women's Cricket World Cup semifinal. - AFP/ICC

Cruise control

Sinner, Zverev march into Paris Masters last eight after straight-sets wins

JANNIK SINNER eased past Francisco Cerundolo 7-5, 6-1 at the Paris Masters yesterday to set up a quarterfinal clash with Ben Shelton, while reigning champion Alexander Zverev earned a straight-sets win over Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in the third round.

A maiden crown in the French capital will return Sinner to No. 1 in the world rankings after current incumbent Carlos Alcaraz suffered a shock early exit at the hands of Britain's Cameron Norrie.

The Italian four-time Grand Slam champion is yet to drop a set in the tournament as he hones in on what would be a fifth title of the season.

"Today I felt like the first set was very crucial. Francisco is a very talented player, it's very difficult to play against him because his level is very high," Sinner said on-court.

"In the second set I raised the level... and I'm very happy to be in the quarterfinals here for the first time."

Sinner edged a close first set, which featured four consecutive breaks, when he pounced on 21st-ranked Argentinian Cerundolo's serve at 6-5 to seize the initiative.

The 24-year-old then immediately stepped it up in the

second set, racing into a 5-1 lead before serving out to book a meeting with US fifth seed Shelton in the quarterfinals.

Shelton beat Russia's Andrey Rublev 7-6 (8-6), 6-3 to reach the last eight.

The victory marked another landmark moment for the 23-year-old this season – following on from his first 1000-level title, won in Toronto this summer – as he will make his debut appearance at the ATP Finals in Turin.

"It's an accumulation of a year's work, a lot of ups-and-downs, great results, poor results and having to bounce back," Shelton said of reaching the season -

ending event.

Zverev continued his title defence with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Spanish 15th seed Davidovich Fokina in the day's final match-up.

The German third seed will next meet an old foe in former world No. 1 Daniil Medvedev, who fought past Lorenzo Sonego of Italy in three sets.

Zverev and Medvedev have met twice before in the Paris Masters, with the now-11th seeded Russian winning on both occasions, including the title-match in 2020.

"Daniil is somebody that I know extremely well and he beats me most of the time. He's a bit like my kryptonite," Zverev admitted.

Earlier, Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan beat US fourth seed Taylor Fritz 7-6 (7-5), 6-2 to set up a last-eight clash with Australian

world No. 6 Alex de Minaur.

Despite arguably being in the form of his life in 2025, 13th seed Bublik said it would require something miraculous for him to win a career-first Masters title.

"I have three matches to go, I have to beat the top ten players, maybe Jannik in the final, so that sounds a bit like a miracle," the 28-year-old said.

Bublik's next opponent, De Minaur, eased past Russian 10th seed Karen Khachanov 6-2, 6-2, and in the process cemented his place at next month's ATP Finals.

Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime reached the quarterfinals as he came from behind for the third time in as many matches in Paris to beat German Daniel Altmaier 3-6, 6-3, 6-2. – AFP



Jannik Sinner (left) and Alexander Zverev. – REUTERS/PIC/AFPIC

Brook upset with England batting form

BY DAVID CHARLESWORTH

HARRY BROOK admitted he is starting to get frustrated at England's topsy-turvy batting after they crashed to another ODI series defeat.

England put 400 on the West Indies in June and pummeled 414 in a dead rubber against South Africa last month, but in eight overseas ODIs in 2025 they have not batted out their 50-over allotment seven times.

In New Zealand, where conditions have assisted fast bowlers especially early on, England have failed to find the correct tempo and paltry totals of 223 and 175 have been overhauled with relative ease.

Jamie Smith, Ben Duckett, Joe Root and Jacob Bethell all head to Australia next week along with Brook for a much-hyped Ashes, while Jos Buttler is regularly hailed as England's best ever white-ball batter.

So their continuing frailties are puzzling to Brook who, when asked if he was irritated for the first time in his brief limited-overs captaincy, said: "Yeah, it is disappointing."

"You go round every single player there and you think, 'bloody hell, there isn't many teams that they don't get into in the world'. It's disappointing we haven't performed as well as we could."

"Everybody in that batting line-up is good enough to be able to face a swinging and seaming ball."

"In my eyes, that's just an excuse."

"And they're good enough to be able to cope with that and score runs."

"It was only a couple of games ago against South Africa in the summer when we got 400, so we're not a million miles away. It's just about a couple of scores here and there and then we nail it down."

After going 2-0 down with one to play in Wellington today, England have now lost six of their past seven ODI series and automatic qualification for the 2027 World Cup is not a formality.

Their position of eighth leaves them vulnerable to being overtaken by the Windies and Bangladesh and if that happens, England would have to enter a qualifying tournament to participate in the World Cup.

It would be quite the fall from grace for a team who have been near full strength recently but, with four wins in 14 ODIs, have been unable to turn around their malaise since winning the 2019 World Cup.

"It's not too dissimilar to the way we play Test cricket," Brook said. "We play aggressively in Test cricket and it's not too far off."

"Obviously, we haven't played much one-day cricket in the last however many years. I can't quite put my finger on why we haven't batted well enough. It's just one of those things." – The Independent

Brundle backs Norris for Formula One title

MARTIN BRUNDLE believes Lando Norris is now the firm favourite to become Britain's latest Formula 1 champion this year. Norris, 25, took the championship lead for the first time since April with a dominant victory in Mexico City on Sunday.

Teammate Oscar Piastri, 24, had been ahead for seven months but a loss of form in recent races opened the door.

McLaren have already secured the constructors' title and, with four rounds remaining, *Sky Sports* pundit

and former F1 driver Brundle has backed Norris for individual honours.

"I think Lando can take it, unless Oscar can return to the form that he had earlier in the season and providing they don't step on their own tails at McLaren," he said.

That said, both McLaren drivers still have Max Verstappen to worry about – his third-placed finish meant he left Mexico with a 36-point deficit to Norris, having entered the weekend 40 points behind Piastri.

Verstappen acknowledged he

needs to do more than that to close the gap and said: "I lost 10 points to Lando. I said before the weekend, everything needs to go perfect to win (the title) and this weekend didn't go perfect. So that's your answer. I think it's going to be tough, but let's see what we can do in other tracks."

Brundle agrees the mountain the Red Bull racer now has to climb is simply too high.

"After that performance at the weekend, I believe Max has got a lot to do, unless he has a few weekends

like Austin (where he took 23 points out of Piastri's lead).

"Of the remaining four events, I believe McLaren will be faster in at least two of them."

"It's two against one. Max doesn't have a rear gunner up there and, every so often, a Ferrari or a Mercedes is grabbing the bigger points, the top three points as well."

"I believe it's between the two McLaren drivers, unless they step on their own tails and hand it to Max." – Express Newspapers

Mercedes chief throws down the gauntlet

TEAM representative Bradley Lord has challenged Mercedes to "finish on the podium at every event" between now and the end of the season.

The Silver Arrows are locked in a tight battle to finish second in the constructors' championship and were leapfrogged by Ferrari last time out at the Mexico City Grand Prix.

Second place for Charles Leclerc and eighth for Lewis Hamilton saw the *Scuderia* leave Mexico with 22 points – eight more than Mercedes managed with Kimi Antonelli crossing the line sixth, one place ahead of George Russell.

It means Ferrari are now second in the standings, though just one point ahead while fourth-placed Red Bull

are also very much in the mix, only 10 behind.

Many teams are mostly focused on the 2026 season now and the same is true for Mercedes, though they are keen to end the year with bragging rights over their rivals.

With that goal in mind, team representative Lord feels they have a car good enough to be on the podium in each of the four remaining rounds, which would likely force Ferrari to match that feat to beat them.

In a video released by the team, he said: "Obviously, the main focus in the factories is now very much on 2026 and both sites are absolutely flat out with development, with production

for next year's car and next year's power unit too.

"In terms of this season, we know that we've got a race to maximise the package we've got."

"We know as well that that is a package good enough to be finishing on the podium at every event, if we get everything right, if we have clean first corners, good starts, clean lap one and things fall our way."

"That didn't happen in Mexico, so the focus for Brazil is really getting the starting setup in the right place."

"It's a Sprint weekend, we've only got one hour of practice and we're straight into sprint qualifying on Friday afternoon, so you need to hit the ground running."

Amorim hits back

Man Utd boss laughs off claim Dyche would win more at United

BY SIMON PEACH

RUBEN AMORIM has laughed off Nottingham Forest boss Sean Dyche's claim that he would have won more matches as Manchester United manager as the pair prepare to go head-to-head.

Today's (11pm Malaysian time) Premier League trip to the City Ground comes on the one-year anniversary of the Portuguese's appointment as Erik ten Hag's successor.

Amorim was unable to oversee an immediate upturn as United stumbled home 15th in the Premier

League and lost the Europa League final, leading to criticism by all and sundry.

Dyche was among those to remark about the Portuguese's set-up, saying in May that he would win more matches if he was in charge simply by playing a 4-4-2 formation.

Amorim shrugged off those remarks ahead of facing the recently appointed Forest boss, saying: "First of all, maybe it's true if we play 4-4-2 we win more games."

"But I always said that I have a way of playing that is going to take a while and then in the future it's going to be better, so we don't know that."

"Then I can look at Sean Dyche as

a manager and then as a pundit. If you are a pundit and you don't say very strong things, I don't want to watch you! I'm the same.

"So, I can understand that it's a completely different job and I know that Sean Dyche is really smart, and he knows how to play the game."

"He also understands that one thing is when we are seeing the game and talking about the game. The other thing is to coach a team, so I understand that, I have nothing to say. I just want to win the next one."

United head to the City Ground on the back of three straight wins as things finally start to look up for Amorim after a topsy-turvy start to

life at the helm.

"It was a journey," he said with a laugh. "It was a big journey. It was tough, it was really tough. Good moments and bad moments."

"I learned a lot and that is really important. I found out that even in my lower moments I can stick with the things that I believe and that is a good thing for anyone to understand."

"Today the answer is different from three weeks ago, so it's important to understand that."

"It's one of the biggest honours of my life to be here and I want to continue here for many years."

United have had a full week to prepare for the trip to Forest, which

saw defender Lisandro Martinez train with the group on Wednesday for the first time since sustaining an ACL injury in February.

"He wants to go to this one, he is not going to take time, he is going to take time," Amorim said. "He started training with us, but we had to change some things in the exercise for him, so slowly he is going to get better."

"It's really good and he gives us that edge in every training session. That is also really good for us."

"The rest of the guys, we have one more day. I don't know about Harry Maguire. I think the rest is fit" - The Independent

Roma meet Milan in pivotal Serie A encounter

In what is shaping up to be an extremely tight Serie A season, all eyes will be on AC Milan's clash at home against AS Roma on Monday (3.45am), as two in-form sides meet after strong starts to the campaign.

Roma have 21 points, the same as leaders Napoli while Milan are fourth with 18 points, level with rivals Inter Milan in third.

Milan manager Massimiliano Allegri might have a problem in attack as Rafael Leao has a hip injury while Santiago Gimenez has struggled to find the net.

An option could be Ruben Loftus-Cheek to pair with Christopher Nkunku.

Two consecutive league draws clearly suggest that, despite their undeniable quality, Milan's

squad still lacks depth.

Both Christian Pulisic and Adrien Rabiot are most likely sidelined for the match.

A win would be especially important in proving that Allegri's project remains on course as they seek to keep up with Serie A's early pace-setters.

Roma have made a remarkable start to the season, and their recent 2-1 victory over Parma further underlined their status as early title contenders.

Gian Piero Gasperini's side may be without Evan Ferguson, although the Irish striker has struggled to find the net in recent weeks.

Napoli are still coping with a lengthy injury list, which manager Antonio Conte described as a curse after Kevin De Bruyne was forced off with an

injury sustained while taking a penalty in the 3-1 win over Inter last Saturday.

While striker Rasmus Hojlund has returned after a muscle injury, Napoli remain without goalkeeper Alex Meret, Stanislav Lobotka and long-term absentee Romelu Lukaku ahead of their clash with this season's surprise package, Como.

Cesc Fabregas's fifth-placed Como secured an impressive 2-0 win at home against Juventus earlier in the month and have one loss so far in the league campaign.

Inter should have little trouble away at Hellas Verona on Sunday, although the absence of Henrikh Mkhitaryan could be felt, with the veteran sidelined for several weeks due to a thigh injury. - Reuters

Leverkusen hope for rivalry revival

BAYER LEVERKUSEN will resume their recent Bundesliga rivalry at Bayern Munich on Sunday (1.30am) but are almost completely unrecognisable from the side who struck fear into the hearts of the Bavarian giants in past seasons.

Under Xabi Alonso, Leverkusen went toe-to-toe with Bayern for more than two seasons, pushing them harder than any German side had done since Jurgen Klopp's Borussia Dortmund more than a decade before.

Alonso's Leverkusen won three and drew three of their six domestic fixtures with Bayern during his tenure at the club, including a 3-0 demolition in February 2024 on the way to an unbeaten league and cup double.

This season however, the clubs' fortunes have reverted to type.

Leverkusen lost several first-team cornerstones in the summer and are on their second coach of the season, with Kasper Hjulmand replacing the sacked Erik ten Hag after just two Bundesliga games.

With just eight games played, Leverkusen sit fifth, seven points behind an unstoppable Bayern.

Bayern's 4-1 German Cup win over Cologne on Wednesday was their 14th in 14 games, breaking a decades-old record for the best start in the history of Europe's top-five leagues.

The contrasting records have Leverkusen looking unlikely to be the first to take points off Bayern this season, but there is hope.

Under Hjulmand, Leverkusen have won six and drawn four, losing just one match - albeit a 7-2 thumping at the hands of European champs Paris Saint-Germain.

With Wednesday's 4-2 German Cup win over second-division Paderborn going to extra-time, Hjulmand promised to give his side time to recover before the trip to Bayern.

"Those extra 30 minutes were not ideal for us, but that's football. From now, it's all about recovery, treatment, nutrition, and everything necessary to be ready to win against Bayern."

"These next few days are important - not much training, but regaining energy."

Reborn under Hjulmand this season, midfielder Jonas Hofmann said Leverkusen would travel to Munich "not to complain, but to take something away with us" - AFP



Real, Barca aim to shake off *Clasico* consequences

Vinicius Junior reacts after being substituted by Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso. - AFP/PPIC

REAL MADRID may have beaten Barcelona in last weekend's *Clasico* but the game exposed problems in both camps, from the difficulties in dealing with Vinicius to the concerning recent form of the Catalans.

Madrid's Brazil superstar Vinicius finally issued an apology on Wednesday, three days after his team defeated arch-rivals Barca 2-1, following his huff at being substituted at the Santiago Bernabeu. He remonstrated with coach Xabi Alonso and marched off down the tunnel after being hauled off in the 72nd minute and replaced with Rodrygo.

"Today I want to apologise to all Madrid fans for my reaction to being

substituted in the *Clasico*.

"Just as I have already done in person during today's training."

"I also want to apologise again to my teammates, club and president," said the 25-year-old, who did not mention Alonso.

The flashpoint comes with negotiations ongoing over a new contract, although his current deal does not expire until 2027.

Vinicius has weighed in with five goals this season in La Liga, although he has been replaced as the main man in the Real squad by Kylian Mbappe with the Frenchman on 16 goals in 13 appearances in all competitions so far - after scoring 44 in all competitions in his first season at the club.

Real fans will be hoping Alonso and Vinicius can go some way towards repairing their relationship in time for tomorrow's (4am Malaysian time) home meeting with struggling Valencia, who are in the relegation zone.

After that Madrid, who are five points clear of Barcelona at the summit of La Liga, head to Liverpool on Champions League duty.

Hansi Flick's Barca must bounce back at home to Elche on Monday (1.30am) after suffering a second defeat in their last three domestic outings, a run that has followed a defeat against Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League.

However, the reigning champions are dealing with something of an

injury crisis just now - playmaker Pedri, who was sent off in the *Clasico*, has now been ruled out for several weeks with a thigh muscle tear.

He joins goalkeepers Joan Garcia and Marc Ter Stegen, as well as Gavi and Raphinha in the treatment room.

While both Robert Lewandowski and Dani Olmo have at least returned to training.

Elsewhere in La Liga this weekend, third-placed Villarreal entertain Rayo Vallecano while fourth-placed Atletico Madrid - unbeaten in La Liga since losing on the opening weekend - take on Sevilla. Real Sociedad, who are languishing just above the drop zone, host Athletic Bilbao in the Basque derby in San Sebastian. - AFP

UNDER-FIRE Arne Slot does not believe Liverpool's sixth loss in seven matches has increased the pressure on his team ahead of tomorrow's (4am Malaysian time) clash with Aston Villa.

The Premier League champions won seven straight matches in all competitions as they bounced back from their shoot-out loss to Crystal Palace in the Community Shield.

But that run came to a halt with a late defeat to the Eagles at Selhurst Park a month ago, sending the Reds into a spiral that they have yet to climb out of.

Palace got the better of Liverpool for the third time this season in Wednesday's 3-0 Carabao Cup fourth round win at Anfield as Slot's decision to leave out stars and make 10

Bullish Slot

Dutchman insists latest loss does not increase pressure on Liverpool

changes backfired.

The Dutchman said he had no regrets despite their latest loss and brushed aside the suggestion it had increased the pressure heading into tomorrow's return to Premier League action at home to Villa.

"I don't think it's possible if you lose five out of six that there's now after six out of seven even more pressure," Slot said.

"If you're on a run of results like

this, if you play for Liverpool, if you manage Liverpool, you know the pressure is there and I don't think it has changed much after this loss.

"But if it did then maybe the most positive thing about the match (against Palace) was that the position we were in, 2-0 down and we weren't really pushing for a goal because we weren't able to, the fans were behind the team, were supporting us.

"That gives me the feeling that

when our players will show how much it means to them, our fans will be incredibly supportive for us. But, again, we face a team that has rested in the week to play us, and that's Villa."

Liverpool could be boosted by the return of midfielder Ryan Gravenberch against Villa following an ankle issue, but British record signing Alexander Isak remains a doubt with a groin complaint.

"I think Ryan has a good chance," Slot said. "The other ones are going to be wait and see... but Ryan has the best chance from all of them."

Palace return to action with a home game against Brentford today (11pm) after Oliver Glasner made a comparatively restrained five changes in the win at Anfield.

The reward is a Carabao Cup

quarterfinal away to Arsenal, with former Gunners striker Eddie Nketiah's hamstring issue the only blemish on a positive night.

"For me, it's always important to stay in the rhythm," Eagles boss Glasner said of his selection.

"We gave a few players a rest. Chris Richards had a small injury, Adam Wharton got ill. Ty Mitchell didn't play, JP Mateta got a rest.

"Unfortunately, we had to bring him on at half-time because Eddie Nketiah got injured with his hamstring again, so that's the only negative aspect from this evening.

"Eddie's injury is really tough, especially for him, because it's the next one after he missed the whole pre-season and the start of the season, so hopefully it's not too serious." - The Independent

■ RICHARD JOLLY

ARNE SLOT has been scrutinising teamsheets. Not his own, either.

Liverpool's Carabao Cup exit to Crystal Palace – and Slot's decision to make 10 changes, rest his regulars and pack his bench with novices – brought different questions about his selectorial choices; after a seeming inability to find his best 11, his second-string side looked inadequate, boys losing to men.

But Slot looked at Chelsea, noted Liverpool were condemned to defeat at Stamford Bridge by the substitute Estevao Willian. There are two obvious ripostes.

It is scarcely an original observation to note that Chelsea have stockpiled vast numbers of players in recent years, but that has tended to prompt more criticism than praise.

And Liverpool's own bench was celebrated at the start of the season when replacements made their own dramatic late interventions.

One of them, Federico Chiesa, is a Euro 2020 winner who arrived at Anfield with plenty of pedigree.

On Wednesday, Slot cast his gaze to Wales, to the team Pep Guardiola picked at Swansea.

"I saw (Manchester) City's line-up and I don't think they had one starter from the weekend, but it felt as if – if you look at their line-up – that they had played with their 11 starters," he said.

Really? Because it included Divine Mukusa, an 18-year-old who has yet to play a minute in the Premier League.

And it did not feature any of those who would figure at the top of the list of Guardiola's preferred 11 starters: Erling Haaland, Gianluigi Donnarumma, Rodri, Ruben Dias, Bernardo Silva.

If Slot was mistaken when he argued he chose a similar bench against Palace as he did against West Ham in the Carabao Cup last season – when, rather than rookies, it contained Mohamed Salah, Luis Diaz, Dominik Szoboszlai, Alexis Mac Allister, Andy Robertson, Trent Alexander-Arnold, Virgil van Dijk and Ibrahima Konate – a manager with six defeats in seven games has rather greater concerns.

But the size and depth of his squad are prominent among them. Slot's defence for sacrificing the Carabao Cup was that he is reduced to 15 or 16 senior first-team players.

Of an injured contingent of six, Ryan Gravenberch is likeliest to return against Aston Villa on Sunday. Slot seemed to suggest that Alexander Isak, Alisson Becker, Curtis Jones and Jeremie Frimpong will not,

Transfer decisions leave Liverpool in dire straits



Liverpool's Federico Chiesa in action with Crystal Palace's Marc Guehi during Wednesday's Carabao Cup 4th Round match at Anfield – REUTERSPIC

while Giovanni Leoni is out for the season.

And yet, while Liverpool were undeniably unlucky that the Italian defender suffered such a serious injury on his debut, a manager who spent a record £450 million (RM2.6b) this year will be afforded less sympathy.

That budget was supposed to prepare him for all eventualities. Slot opted to be cautious against Palace, rationalising that the last time he picked a player he thought was ready but who was not, Isak was injured against Eintracht Frankfurt.

It nevertheless bears repetition that the major reason why Isak did not have a proper pre-season and has never been in peak physical condition for Liverpool is Isak himself.

The Swede is yet to complete 90 minutes in club football this season, whereas Marc Guehi, who took a

different approach in a time of uncertainty, has done so 14 times and played 89 minutes in a 15th match.

Liverpool have a particularly gruelling week ahead – Villa, Real Madrid and City – but they navigated similar spells last season.

They faced Chelsea, RB Leipzig and Arsenal in one three-game spell, then Real, City and Newcastle in another.

Yet now, they can look depleted and bedraggled, their squad stretched and too small.

But it is worth noting that it is a consequence of their decisions. Slot accepted in September that Liverpool could have problems if they suffered from six injuries. Now they have six.

But he said a month ago: "We've got 20 or 21 players where some other teams we are in competition with are on 24, 25 or 26. But that's the choice we make."

And that was reflected in

Liverpool's summer business. "It is also why we can maybe spend a bit more on one player instead of bringing three in, and that is maybe the difference between the clubs," he added.

It may be oversimplifying, but instead of Isak, Liverpool could have bought two £60 million (RM348m) players; instead of Florian Wirtz, two at £50 million (RM290m) apiece. Which, in effect, was what Arsenal did.

They acquired Viktor Gyokeres, Noni Madueke, Eberechi Eze and Martin Zubimendi, none for under £48 million (RM264m), none for over £70 million (RM406m). By common consensus, Arsenal have the deepest and most balanced squad now.

City provide a pertinent comparison, too. Jack Grealish is the £100 million (RM580m) anomaly in their record. Guardiola is far likelier to buy players in the £40 million-£65

million (RM232m-RM377m) bracket.

Donnarumma is cheaper than that, even if his wages are considerable, and the City manager has spent around £350 million (RM2b) in 2025, but on 11 players.

And that, in turn, is because, amid injuries, City realised they had left themselves with too small a squad last season. But a more equal spread of resources among the squad meant Guardiola could field a £350 million starting 11 in the Carabao Cup. Slot's cost less than Isak.

They show contrasting approaches. Liverpool tried to get the best 11, which, as long as they struggle to gel, they do not have.

Arsenal and City went for more strength in depth. And so, like much else at Anfield now, it comes back to Isak and Wirtz, to Liverpool's expensive recruitment drive. - The Independent

SOUTH KOREAN golfer Choi Hye-Jin continued to flex her muscles as she carded an impressive 6-under 66 to stay five strokes ahead at the top of the leaderboard in the second round of the Maybank Championship 2025 at the Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club (KLGCC) yesterday.

The Korean began the day with a bogey before turning on the style to go on a seven-birdie spree at the second, third, fifth, seventh, eighth, 13th and 18th holes for a two-day total of 14-under 130.

"I try not to think too much... I just choose and I just hit it," she told reporters after completing the second round.

Choi acknowledged that the heat was more intense yesterday and revealed her plans to conserve energy over the weekend.

Meanwhile, defending champion Yin Ruoning of China stayed in the title hunt as she carded a 5-under 67 to be joint second with Australia's Hannah Green, who scored a 4-under 69. Ruoning and Green have a two-day total of 9-under 135.

Ruoning, who scored a 4-under 68 in the first round, was clearly pleased with her overall performance yesterday, particularly her putting.

"Like I said during the previous press conference, I think my putting is the only thing that is not quite working. But I feel really good after two days," she said, adding that patience remains the key ingredient heading into the weekend.

Birdie blitz

Choi stays top of leaderboard as defending champ Ruoning lurks

"I think you've just got to be patient and take it one shot at a time. Like I said in the press (conference), I think that a 5-under every day would be a good score. So, I'm just trying to play 5-under every day. (Of course) If I can shoot lower, that will be great," she said.

Ruoning also expressed her fondness for the Maybank Championship, especially the support she receives in Malaysia.

"I told the press conference that this tournament is probably one of my favourite stops of all.

"Every time I come here and play, I can hear some, like Chinese fans, shouting my name. Just feels really good to have their support," she said.

Malaysians Ashley Lau and Genevieve Ling emerged as the best local golfers after the second round after both players carded identical par-72 scores for a two-day total of 3-under 141, to be joint 41st with six others.

Ashley birdied the third, eighth, 10th and

16th holes but bogeyed the seventh, 11th, 12th and 15th holes.

Genevieve, meanwhile, birdied the third, fifth, eighth and 18th holes and bogeyed the first, 11th, 15th and 16th holes.

Ashley admitted to not striking as well as she did in the opening round, particularly on the greens.

"I guess you can say that putting is my bread and butter. So, I was getting a little frustrated. My putts weren't dropping.

"My caddie was telling me to 'keep your head up and look up... forget about the last shot and just focus on your next shot, focus on the next hole,'" she said.

Meanwhile, Genevieve said that while the course conditions were largely similar to the first day, the greens, though, were slightly quicker.

"I think I definitely have to go to the range for a little bit just to get like a good feel, and then I'm pretty much going to be set," she said.

As for the other Malaysian golfers, Mirabel Ting ended the day tied for 49th place after posting a 3-over 75; Liyana Durisic finished joint 62nd with a 4-over 76; and Kelly Tan carded a 2-over 74 to be joint 55th. - Bernama



Choi Hye-Jin in action during the Maybank Golf Championship 2025 at the Kuala Lumpur Golf & Country Club yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

Aaron-Wooi Yik Czech into last eight

NATIONAL men's doubles shuttlers Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik took just 38 minutes to defeat the Czech Republic's Jiri Kral-Ondrej Kral 21-9, 22-20 and check into the quarterfinals of the 2025 Hylo Open in Saarlandhalle in Saarbrücken, Germany, yesterday.

Next up for Aaron-Wooi Yik is a clash with Sabar Karyaman Gutama-Moh Reza Pahlevi Isfahani after the Indonesians downed France's Christo Popov-Toma Junior Popov 21-12, 21-15 in another second-round match.

Another men's pair - Man Wei Chong-Tee Kai Wun - are also through to the quarterfinals after defeating Indonesia pair Bagas Maulana-

Leo Rolly Carnando.

The world No. 5 pair, however, had to work hard to edge past the Indonesian duo in a three-game thriller, winning 21-9, 17-21, 22-20 in 52 minutes.

Wei Chong-Kai Wun are expected to face a stern test in their bid for a semifinal spot when they take on Indonesia's top men's doubles pair, Fajar Alfian-Muhammad Shohibul Fikri, who defeated home favourites Bjarne Geiss-Jones Ralfy Jansen 21-17, 16-21, 21-13.

Also storming into the quarterfinals were two national women's doubles pairs, Go Pei Kee-Teo Mei Xing and Ong Xin Yee-Carmen Ting after defeating their respective

opponents.

Go Pei Kee-Teo Mei Xing advanced after edging Taiwan's Teng Chun Hun-Yang Chu Yun 9-21, 23-21, 24-22, while Ong Xin Yee-Carmen Ting earned a straight-game win over Spain's Nikol Carulla-Carmen Maria Jimenez 25-23, 21-14.

Former world No. 1 men's doubles pair Goh Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin Rumsani campaign came to an end in the second round after they lost 9-21, 19-21 to Denmark's Daniel Lundgaard-Mads Vestergaard.

Malaysia's interest in women's singles also came to an end after both K. Letshanaa and S. Kisona crashed out. - Bernama

Could FAM face harsher sanctions over heritage player scandal?

AS Malaysian football braces for the Fifa Appeal Committee's impending verdict on the Football Association of Malaysia's (FAM) appeal, tension continues to mount among fans nationwide.

At the centre of the controversy are seven naturalised players - part of FAM's short-term strategy to elevate Harimau Malaya's competitiveness - who now find themselves embroiled in a scandal that threatens to derail the nation's footballing ambitions.

So far, Fifa has imposed a fine of SHF350,000 (RM1.9 million) on FAM and handed a one-year ban to the seven players. But the question remains: could the world football body decide to impose even harsher punishment if the appeal fails?

In a similar case in 2016, Fifa discovered that twelve Brazilian-born players had represented Timor-Leste between 2011 and 2015 using forged documents to falsely claim Timorese ancestry.

Following the investigation, the Football Federation of Timor-Leste (FFTL) was fined SHF70,000 (RM368,000) and banned from international football for three years after its appeal was rejected.

The case has since served as a precedent for how Fifa handles nationality and eligibility violations, a comparison that now looms large over Malaysia's situation.

Sports analyst Datuk Pekan Ramli said that even if FAM's appeal is rejected, it is unlikely Fifa will impose any additional or heavier sanctions.

He explained that the current penalties are expected to remain, depending largely on the scope of the appeal submitted by FAM to Fifa's Appeals Committee.

However, Pekan warned that if Fifa upholds the original ruling, the ripple effects could extend beyond Zurich - potentially prompting further disciplinary action from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

"Since some of the affected players represented Malaysia in the Asian Cup qualifiers against Nepal and Vietnam, those match results could be overturned - resulting in automatic defeats for Malaysia," he explained, citing historical precedent.

In the 2016 Timor-Leste case, the AFC conducted a parallel investigation confirming that nine ineligible players had participated in 29 AFC and seven Fifa matches.

As a result, the AFC expelled Timor-Leste from the 2023 Asian Cup qualifiers, fined the FFFL US\$ 20,000 (RM84,000), and ordered forfeits for all affected matches, along with a suspended fine of US\$ 56,000 (RM235,000). Two officials were personally sanctioned - one banned for three years and fined US\$ 9,000 (RM37,800) and another fined US\$ 3,000 (RM12,600).

The scandal severely damaged Timor-Leste's football progress and reputation, and the nation only regained participation rights after overhauling its player eligibility and naturalisation processes.

"There's legitimate concern that Malaysia could face a similar outcome," Pekan cautioned.

"Hopefully, it won't reach the stage where the national team is suspended from the remaining 2027 Asian Cup qualifiers," Pekan said. - scoop.my

SHORTS

Former Sarawak coach Vest dies

Former Sarawak football coach Alan Vest, who guided the state team to some of its greatest achievements in the 1990s, died on Thursday. He was 86.

Perth Glory Football Club, where Vest later served as assistant and interim manager, announced his passing in a statement on their official website today, expressing deep sorrow over the loss of the man fondly known as "Vestie".

Originally from Barnsley in the United Kingdom, Vest first made his mark as a player in

the upper tiers of English non-league football before moving to New Zealand and then Australia in the early 1970s.

An industrious forward, he earned 17 senior caps for New Zealand, scoring six goals, including one on his debut against New Caledonia in 1972.

Vest then turned to coaching and achieved legendary status in Malaysia when he guided Sarawak to lift the 1992 Malaysia FA Cup, the 1997 Malaysia Premier League title and the 1998 Charity Shield, thus cementing his legacy as one of the most successful foreign coaches in Malaysian football history.

During his time with Sarawak, Vest transformed them from a mid-tier team into a formidable force in Malaysian football, with the coach's time there from 1992 to 1998 being hailed by fans as the "Bujang Senang" era.

PDRM lift Interforce Games

The Sangsaka Biru Contingent (Royal Malaysia Police) emerged as the overall champion by winning four out of five sports contested at the '60th Interforce Games Royal Malaysia Police-Singapore Police Force' which ended on Thursday.

The championships between the two forces -

the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) with the participation of 84 athletes and the Singapore Police Force (SPF) with 77 athletes - took place in and around Kuantan.

In the competition, the PDRM team successfully won the golf event, followed by badminton.

For women's futsal, the PDRM team also successfully defeated SPF 2-0, while SPF only managed to secure one victory in netball.

In football, Esscom Special Force Chief of Staff SAC Nasri Mansor emerge as the hero after scoring the only goal of the match in the 54th minute, resulting in PDRM defeating SPF 1-0.



Slot under the cosh

Liverpool feel pressure to end 'crisis' run as City test Bournemouth limits



Liverpool manager Arne Slot looks dejected after Wednesday's Carabao Cup 4th round defeat against Crystal Palace at Anfield. -REUTERSPIC

LIVERPOOL face an in-form Aston Villa as the Premier League champions look to arrest their remarkable collapse tomorrow, while Arsenal aim to surge further clear in the title race.

The Gunners hold a four-point lead over Bournemouth, who travel to Manchester City, before their trip to Burnley.

Third-placed Tottenham are only five points off the top but are aiming to end a three-game winless run at home when they host London rivals Chelsea.

Liverpool boss Arne Slot badly needs his star names to get back on track after being dumped out the League Cup by Crystal Palace on Wednesday to compound a miserable run for the Premier League champions.

Slot made his priorities clear by making 10 changes as Palace cruised to a 3-0 win at Anfield against a youthful Liverpool selection.

The Dutchman said he could not risk any more injuries to his key players with the visit of Villa quickly followed by clashes against Real Madrid and Manchester City.

Five games into the Premier League campaign, Liverpool led Villa by 12 points. Four matches later they meet separated only by goal difference.

Villa have overcome their difficult start with four consecutive wins, including notable scalps against Tottenham and City, to surge back into contention for the Champions League places.

At the same time, Liverpool's title defence has imploded.

The Reds have not kept a clean sheet for 10 games as Slot struggles to find the right balance to a side disrupted by a huge squad turnover during the transfer window.

Liverpool spent a Premier League record near £450 million (2.6b), but crucially lost more players than they recruited with Trent Alexander-Arnold and Luis Diaz particularly missed.

"To see the champions lose four games in a row in the Premier League with the expenditure in the summer, I think we're in crisis time for Liverpool right now," said former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher.

Jamie Redknapp has accused Slot of fielding a Liverpool team he knew was not good enough to beat Palace, before saying "everything" is a problem area at the club.

"He made 10 changes from the weekend against Brentford. You can't tell me he's picked that team today and those subs, thinking, 'That'll get me a result against a really good Crystal Palace side.'

"You might hope you can, but I did not think for one second they could beat them and he has made a mistake today."

Redknapp also added: "It's not just the defence, it's not just the midfield, it's everything right now. They have got to show some character. They've got some really tough games ahead."

The League's longest unbeaten run faces



PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURES

All matches at 10pm Malaysian time unless stated.

TODAY

Brighton vs Leeds
Burnley vs Arsenal
Crystal Palace vs Brentford
Fulham vs Wolves
Nottm Forest vs Man Utd

TOMORROW

Tottenham vs Chelsea (1.30am)
Liverpool vs Aston Villa (4am)
West Ham vs Newcastle

MONDAY (12.30am)

Man City vs Bournemouth

TUESDAY (4am)

Sunderland vs Everton

a stern test on Monday (12.30am) when Bournemouth visit the Etihad, hoping to land another blow to City's title challenge.

The Cherries have not lost since the opening night of the campaign at Liverpool to spark ambitions of qualifying for Europe for the first time in the club's history.

City are six points adrift of Arsenal after a 1-0 defeat at Villa last weekend ended their nine-game unbeaten run.

Pep Guardiola's fear that his side were becoming too reliant on Erling Haaland was realised.

No City player other than the Norwegian has scored more than once in the Premier League this season.

Omar Marmoush and Rayan Cherki have missed much of the opening few months of the season through injury, but both scored in a 3-1 League Cup win over Swansea in midweek to bolster the firepower at Guardiola's disposal.

Thomas Frank has made a fine start to solving Tottenham's troubles on the road, but is yet to foster the "fortress" he desires at home.

Of Spurs' 17 points from nine games, 13 have come away from home thanks to impressive wins at Manchester City, West Ham, Leeds and Everton.

But Bournemouth and Villa have won in north London either side of a disappointing 1-1 draw against bottom-of-the-table Wolves.

"We would like our home to be a fortress," said Frank. "It cannot only be the team, it cannot only be the fans. It needs to be both."

"We need to bring energy to each other. We need to work unbelievably hard, perform well, try to be positive."

Only a second League win over Chelsea since 2018 would quickly win over any doubters the Dane faces in the Spurs support. - AFP