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More parents now aware of the need to monitor the types of video games their children play and restrict the use of smart devices.  
- AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN



# Fitting measures

**Heightened awareness on harm posed by unsupervised engagement in internet activities by children prompts parents to keep closer tabs and set limits on screen time.**

## INSIDE



**Criticism on reciprocal trade pact politically inclined, says PM.**



**Govt appreciates role of media in delivering accurate info: Ministry**



**Expert advocates 'Sure, Swift and Severe' moves to curb drink-driving.**

## 'Audits not meant to intimidate taxpayers'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Tax audits and investigations carried out by the Inland Revenue Board are not meant to intimidate taxpayers but form part of its strategy to educate and promote voluntary compliance in line with the Malaysia Madani principles.

The board's Tax Audit Policy and Quality Division (Tax Compliance Sector) director Jema'ah Sedek said the new approach emphasised elements of awareness, education and services, with officers conducting field visits not only to review documents but also to provide guidance and advice to taxpayers.

"The audit and investigation process is not a 'punishment' or a 'one-sided action' but a fair and balanced procedure.

"The board as the tax administrator not only requires taxpayers to fulfil their obligations but also ensures that their rights are protected," she said on Bernama TV's *Ruang Bicara* programme.

She said the board employed a risk analysis system and various sources of information to identify audit and investigation cases, including third-party reports, public complaints and monitoring of lifestyle patterns compared with declared income.

She added that if audits focus on compliance checks, investigations target high-risk cases involving tax evasion or avoidance, including offences under the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001.

"It now collaborates closely with agencies such as Bank Negara Malaysia, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission and police to strengthen intelligence on suspicious financial activities, including cross-border transactions."

Jema'ah said taxpayers had clear rights during the audit and investigation process, including the right to identify officers, appoint licensed tax agents and access documents taken for review.

She reminded taxpayers not to offer gifts or payments to officers to avoid conflicts of interest. – Bernama

## Neckties no longer mandatory for civil servants

**PUTRAJAYA:** All civil servants are no longer required to wear neckties during working hours or when attending meetings, according to the Public Service Department.

The directive, signed by its director-general Tan Sri Wan Ahmad Dahlan Abdul Aziz, emphasises a more flexible and people-friendly working environment without compromising professionalism.

It said the wearing of neckties remained mandatory for certain official events such as welcoming ceremonies for foreign delegations, international meetings, colloquiums or conferences involving foreign dignitaries.

In addition, ministries and departments may specify the requirement to wear neckties for certain official functions or programmes, provided the instruction is clearly stated in the invitation letter or email to avoid confusion. – Bernama

# Trade pact with US **not** detrimental to nation: PM

"There must be give and take in any negotiation, especially when it involves major ties and investments"

**GYEONGJU (South Korea):** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim described as "simply political" the claim by some quarters that the Malaysia-United States (US) Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) is detrimental to the country.

He said there must be give and take in any negotiation, especially when it involves major ties and investments.

He added that Malaysia, however, still prioritises and upholds its honour.

Anwar said Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz had already given a lengthy and clear explanation on ART in Parliament.

"Hence, if we are going to argue over one or two words in the agreement which they (certain quarters) object to, I (say) there's no need for further explanation (as) it has been explained well by Tengku Zafrul again and again in Parliament.

"If they choose to attack, it is a political matter," he said at the end of the first day

of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting here yesterday.

Anwar was responding to a question about the claim that ART represents the surrender of economic freedom and that it consists of various booby trap or time bomb provisions that can be detrimental to Malaysia in the future.

"This agreement is not the only agreement in the world. All countries sign agreements. We see the overall context as well as implications and what leeway is available for us. It's not to avoid but to seek leeway for alternative routes. All agreements are like that."

He said there can be no denying the importance of maintaining good relations with the US, Bernama reported.

"We had meetings with US President Donald Trump and with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, carefully discussing matters in detail including on semiconductors and rare earth minerals.

"All these were discussed. So it is a lie to say that we did this to surrender to the US."

Anwar reiterated that the signing of ART took into consideration national interests and national laws.

"And to do that, we need patience and wisdom, not anger. Not these continuous rancorous exchanges.

"Did we compromise or concede on our position regarding Gaza? No. Did I tell Trump to agree with everything? No. We said we support phase one (of the Gaza ceasefire plan, and) we want a comprehensive solution."

On Malaysia's approach to global diplomacy, Anwar said he navigates challenges based on nation's interests.

"How do you manage to navigate in a situation that is quite volatile in terms of the tension between the US and China? How do you have the courage to get Brazil and South Africa into a forum together with President Donald Trump and the US?"

"My response is that we decide based on our national interest."



Anwar speaking with China President Xi Jinping during a session at the Apec Economic Leaders' Meeting in Gyeongju. – AFP/IC

## Malaysia leaves clear imprint on Asean history

**PUTRAJAYA:** Every time Malaysia chairs Asean it leaves a clear imprint on the region's history.

In 1977 Kuala Lumpur advanced the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality. In 1997 it helped steer Asean through the Asian Financial Crisis.

In 2005 it hosted the first-ever East Asia Summit, and in 2015 it witnessed the birth of the Asean Community.

This year saw Malaysia's legacy shine once again through sustainable diplomacy and inclusive leadership.

International Islamic University Malaysia Department of Political Science and Madani Studies lecturer Prof Dr Zainal Abidin Sanusi said the 47th Asean Summit proved Malaysia's ability to balance global expectations with regional realities.

He said under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Asean projected itself as a centrist bloc, engaging all major powers but beholden to none.

The summit drew an extraordinary line-

up of world leaders, from United States President Donald Trump and Chinese Premier Li Qiang to the presidents of Brazil (Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva) and South Africa (Cyril Ramaphosa) as well as the prime ministers of Japan (Sanae Takaichi), Australia (Anthony Albanese) and Canada (Mark Carney).

"Anwar's calm handling of Trump's sudden Liberation Day tariffs, which unsettled Asian markets, showed Malaysia's diplomatic maturity.

"Instead of reacting emotionally he redirected the debate towards mutual respect, shared prosperity and a rules-based order. It was composure, not confrontation, that carried the day."

He said one of Malaysia's proudest achievements was the formal admission of Timor-Leste as Asean's 11th member.

"It wasn't just symbolic. It was a moral commitment that no nation in our region should be left behind."

He said Malaysia also facilitated the

Cambodia-Thailand Joint Declaration on Peace and Security, known as the KL Peace Accord, witnessed by Anwar and Trump.

"The accord ended the deadliest border clash in decades and reaffirmed Malaysia's role as a trusted mediator who is persuasive, principled and pressure-free."

Zainal Abidin said Malaysia's chairmanship reframed sustainability not as a side theme but as a core diplomatic strategy.

"From green economy cooperation and digital integration to energy security and social sustainability, Asean's agenda this year mirrored Kuala Lumpur's belief that lasting peace depends on balanced growth and shared responsibility.

"Manila must now turn vision into delivery, driving green growth, digital inclusion and social equity across the region. If Malaysia rekindled Asean's purpose, the Philippines must realise its promise," he said about the baton being passed to the Philippines. – Bernama

# Postal Services Fund to be activated next year

Move aims to ensure viability, sustainability of postal and delivery services nationwide, says minister

BY **FAIZ RUZMAN**  
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**SHAH ALAM:** The government will activate the long-outlined Postal Services Fund by the third quarter of 2026 to support the sustainability of postal and courier services nationwide, said Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil.

He said although the fund was provided for under the Postal Services Act 2012, it was never implemented by previous administrations, leaving Pos Malaysia to shoulder its Universal Service Obligation (USO) without structural support.

"Under the current government, we have decided that this fund must be established," he said at the National Courier Day celebration at the Shah Alam Convention Centre yesterday.

The fund is intended to ensure that mail and parcels continue to reach remote and commercially low-demand areas.

Fahmi said the government is now examining whether similar support should be extended to local courier companies to stabilise the wider delivery ecosystem.

"The aim is sustainability and viability for both postal and

courier services."

He said parcel volumes have increased sharply year after year, and some major sorting hubs now process over one million parcels daily.

He added that Malaysia would begin engagement with agencies in other Asean countries to study the feasibility of regional alignment of postal and courier sustainability frameworks.

"In some countries, this sector falls under different ministries, so the regulatory instruments are not the same.

"We will study the best way to expand this cooperation across Southeast Asia," he said, adding that discussions would be carried out with the Association of Malaysian Express Carriers.

He described regional coordination as necessary to keep the sector resilient as the digital economy expands.

Fahmi said one of the most significant outcomes of this year's National Courier Day is the network-sharing framework between e-commerce platforms and courier companies, which aims to ensure that delivery volume distribution does not disproportionately concentrate among a few operators.

"This cooperation ensures parcels can be delivered nationwide while allowing local



Fahmi flanked by his deputy Teo Nie Ching and secretary-general Datuk Mohamad Fauzi Md Isa at the event in Shah Alam yesterday. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

courier companies to benefit.

"The sector must remain viable, and we must ensure there is enough employment for those working in this industry."

As part of the move towards operational rollout, Shopee signed a collaboration yesterday with GD Express, City-Link Express, Pos Malaysia and SPX Express to begin coordinated

parcel-handling arrangements across shared delivery networks.

The arrangement is expected to spread peak-season load, prevent small courier firms from being crowded out and support service continuity across states.

Fahmi said Malaysia currently has 101 courier licence holders, along with one USO licence held by Pos Malaysia.

## Courier firms told to strengthen parcel screening

**SHAH ALAM:** Courier companies will be required to strengthen parcel screening procedures and increase coordination with enforcement agencies following cases of courier networks being misused for illegal activities, said Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil.

He said the government has been informed of incidents in which loopholes in courier handling processes were exploited by criminal groups to move prohibited items through delivery channels.

"If there are loopholes in courier processes that have been misused, we are asking the courier sector to be aware, take note and immediately resolve them," Fahmi said after the National Courier Day celebration in Shah Alam yesterday.

During his speech, he said the Narcotics Crime Investigation Department had alerted the ministry to cases in which courier networks were exploited to move illicit substances, prompting the government to push for closer cooperation between delivery firms and law enforcement agencies.

"We were informed by police that there have been incidents in which courier services were misused by those involved in drug trafficking.

"So, there is a need for us to work more closely and more rigorously to prevent criminals from taking advantage of the courier networks in our country."

Fahmi said the misuse was not limited to narcotics distribution as the ministry had also received reports from NGOs on the delivery of protected and endangered wildlife, including snakes, through courier services.

"So, cooperation must not only involve Customs and police but also NGOs."

The event also saw the launch of the Code of Practice for Postal Services, which Fahmi said would serve as a baseline operational framework for postal and courier companies to follow.

He said the code outlines expectations on service quality, worker safety, consumer protection and security safeguards.

"Courier operators will be given time to review and adopt the code, with coordination to be managed by the Postal Forum," added Fahmi. — By **Faiz Ruzman**

## 'Umno against parachuting leaders into constituencies'

BY **IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE**  
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**PETALING JAYA:** It is not in Umno's DNA to parachute leaders into constituencies, said Kepala Batas Umno division information chief Mohd Naim Saleh, amid talk that former health minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar may return to Umno and contest a parliamentary seat.

"Umno is different from PAS. In Umno, constituencies are usually represented by local leaders. PAS can field candidates anywhere, but Umno members prefer their own," Mohd Naim told *theSun*.

He said if Khairy, also known

as KJ, were to be fielded in Kepala Batas, it could spark resistance from the grassroots.

"Umno members find it hard to accept outsiders contesting in their area. If KJ is placed here, expect objections."

On speculation that Khairy may rejoin Umno, Mohd Naim said many younger members support the idea, citing his experience as former Umno Youth chief and Cabinet minister under several prime ministers.

"He has served under several premiers, including the late Pak Lah (Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) and Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak. He's not too old, not too young, and could help reform the party."

He said any decision on candidates for Kepala Batas rests with the party leadership.

"As of now, we've received no directive. Whatever happens, it's up to the leadership. But Kepala Batas isn't short of capable leaders. We have Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican, who's already a minister and on the Umno supreme council."

Mohd Naim, who is also Penaga state assembly coordinator, was responding to local members who voiced mixed feelings about Khairy's possible comeback, especially if he were to become BN's Kepala Batas candidate in the next general election.

Speculation has been

swirling for months that Khairy is eyeing a return to active politics. On Thursday, *Berita Harian* reported that the former Rembau MP is expected to rejoin Umno before the Sabah state election at the end of next month.

Citing party sources, the Malay daily said Khairy, who currently hosts a radio show on Hot FM, has received the nod from Umno's top leadership, particularly president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, to return to the party fold.

Khairy was expelled from Umno in January 2023 after openly criticising the party leadership during the 15th general election campaign.

## More than 413,000 students to sit for SPM

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) 2025 examination, involving 413,372 candidates, will begin tomorrow and run until Dec 23 at 3,350 examination

centres nationwide.

The Education Ministry said in a statement that the Bahasa Melayu oral test would be held from Nov 3 to 6, followed by the

English Language oral test from Nov 10 to 13.

"Science practical tests will take place from Nov 17 to 19, while the Malay Language and English

Language listening tests will be conducted on Nov 20."

The written examinations will be held from Nov 25 to Dec 23, with 127,526 examination personnel

appointed to ensure smooth management of the exam. The timetable can be downloaded from the Malaysian Examinations Board portal at [lp.moe.gov.my](http://lp.moe.gov.my). — Bernama



**PUTRAJAYA:** The Housing and Local Government Ministry has reiterated its commitment to always respect media freedom and appreciate the important role of media practitioners in delivering accurate and authentic information to the people.

In a statement, the ministry said it appreciated the contribution of local and international media through the coverage provided, as well as respected the freedom of journalists to ask questions during a press conference.

"However, the ministry would like to clarify that the party answering the question should also be given space to respond to each question posed.

"In addition, prudent reprimands are to ensure accuracy of facts, and mutual understanding is also a method of togetherness in order to achieve the objectives of the government's programme and

# Government reiterates appreciation for media role

Ministry says contributions of local and international outlets valued, while freedom of journalists to ask questions at press conferences respected

policies," the statement read. The statement said the press conference held for the launch of the Lighting Innovation Project Towards Urban Sustainability in conjunction with Visit Malaysia 2026 or I LITE U, among other things,

aimed to strengthen the country's tourism promotion efforts as well as woo international tourists to the unique and iconic attractions in Kuala Lumpur, Bernama reported.

"As a sign of commitment in

upholding the dignity of Bahasa Melayu as the national language, the entire press conference by Nga was conducted in Bahasa Melayu, including a speech by the Kuala Lumpur mayor (Datuk Seri Dr Maimunah Mohd Sharif)."

On Oct 29, Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Meng was reported to have threatened a journalist during a press conference when the minister was asked about the use of English instead of the national language for the I LITE U tourism theme that was held

in conjunction with Visit Malaysia Year 2026.

Nga responded by saying that tourists visiting Malaysia need to feel a sense of belonging.

"This is Visit Malaysia Year. You have to learn how to come out from your comfort zone. Our targets are tourists from all over the world. Even if we are not proficient in the English language, we must make sure that every tourist has a sense of belonging. It's a given that we respect our national language. So, I hope you don't make this an issue," Nga said.

## Award recognition for Bagan Datuk Bridge

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Bagan Datuk Bridge, which connects Hilir Perak and Kampung Sejangap in Perak Tengah, won second place in the Community Road Category of the Mino Best Project Award.

The accolade was in conjunction with the 17th Road Engineering Association of Asia and Australasia (REAAA) Conference held from Oct 27 until yesterday in Goyang, South Korea.

Public Works Minister Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi, who received the award from REAAA president Dr Sung-Hwan Kim at the closing of the conference, said the road project, under the supervision of his ministry, managed to connect two major districts in Perak with a mere 10km route that took only seven minutes, a vast contrast compared with the previous hour-long 67km trip.

"The facility really makes it easy for residents to go about their daily concerns, speeds up delivery of agricultural produce and opens up more economic and tourism opportunities in Bagan Datuk.

"The bridge, with its sophisticated eco-friendly design, uses a system with box culverts to ensure that nearby residents are still connected," he said in a statement.

Nanta said the project is equipped with navigation lights for the safety of ships and boats, and was built to ensure long-term sustainability.

"The bridge also acts as a catalyst for community connectivity, expands access and mobility between two major districts and is an engineering model that balances technical competence, social welfare and environmental sustainability," he added.

Besides the bridge award, Malaysian professional engineer Datuk Dr Dennis Ganendra of Minconsult Sdn Bhd received the Hwang Award, a special



Nanta said the bridge makes it easy for residents, speeds up delivery of agricultural produce and opens up more economic and tourism opportunities in Bagan Datuk. - PIC COURTESY OF ALEXANDER NANTA LINGGI FACEBOOK PAGE

recognition given to individuals who have contributed greatly to REAAA and road engineering development in the region.

Nanta described Dennis's recognition as proof that Malaysian engineering capabilities were on par with developed countries and acknowledged internationally.

"This isn't just about a win by a single project, but also a victory for all Malaysian engineers. It

reflects our capabilities and spirit to build infrastructure that not only connects districts but also unites and develops communities."

With two main awards - the REAAA Mino Best Project Award and the REAAA Hwang Award - Malaysian engineering firms have shown prowess in producing high quality projects that are resilient and people-oriented, he added. - Bernama

## New Socso scheme offers 24-hour protection

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The implementation of the Non-Work-Related Accident Scheme, or Lindung 24/7, by the Social Security Organisation (Socso) represents a key step in strengthening social protection for workers amid the shift towards hybrid and flexible work arrangements.

In a statement, Socso said the scheme's implementation could address existing gaps in the social protection system, citing statistics from January to September 2023, which recorded 11,851 claims rejected for being classified as non-work-related accidents.

"Therefore, there is an urgent need to introduce a new scheme that offers 24-hour protection for both local and foreign workers in Malaysia.

"Through Lindung 24/7, workers will benefit from a comprehensive social safety net, covering accidents that occur outside working hours, unlike the previous scheme, which applied only to work-related incidents," the statement said.

With the implementation of the latest scheme, over 9.6 million active contributors under the Lindung Pekerja programme will receive benefits, thereby strengthening the social safety net for workers in Malaysia and putting it on par with global practices.

"This step marks another significant transformation in the history of national social protection under the supervision of Socso, in line with the principles of inclusive and comprehensive coverage," the statement said.

Socso also said the rollout of Lindung 24/7 is expected to alleviate financial pressure on the public health system, as it will cover the cost of treatment and rehabilitation for the contributors involved.

It added that under this scheme, eligible workers will receive various benefits, including medical benefit, temporary disablement benefit, permanent disablement benefit, dependents' benefit, constant-attendance allowance and funeral management benefit. - Bernama

## Nod for water, sewerage projects

**KUCHING:** A total of 44 water and sewerage development projects worth nearly RM6 billion have been approved for implementation in Sarawak under the First Rolling Plan of the 13th Malaysia Plan next year.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof said the projects comprise 11 new and 33 ongoing initiatives focusing on flood mitigation, river conservation, coastal erosion control, water supply and sewerage systems.

"For 2026, the government has allocated RM195.6 million for water and sewerage projects in

the state, an increase of more than 53% compared with 2025," he said at the Energy Transition and Water Transformation Ministry's Sarawak Media Night 2025 here on Friday.

He said of the total, 27 projects worth RM172.4 million will be funded by the federal government, while 17 others will be financed through loans amounting to RM23.24 million.

Under the National Flood Mitigation Plan, the government has also allocated RM24.7 billion for flood control projects nationwide, including in Sarawak. - Bernama

# Call for deterrent measures to curb drink-driving

Local councils, nightlife venue operators need to set up designated pickup areas, overnight parking arrangements and voluntary breathalyser screening to ensure safety of drivers: Group

BY FAIZ RUZMAN  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Predictable enforcement patterns and limited late-night transport options are among factors contributing to motorists continuing to drive after drinking alcohol, according to the Malaysian Road and Transportation Safety Association.

Its president Md Hairolazaman Muhamad Nor told *theSun* that despite heavier penalties and public awareness campaigns, some drivers believe they can avoid detection by authorities as roadblocks are often conducted at familiar or fixed locations.

"Deterrence depends on the certainty of being caught. If roadblocks can be anticipated, people will simply adjust

their routes. That weakens enforcement," he said in a written reply.

Md Hairolazaman pointed out that the lack of late-night transport alternatives and safe e-hailing pickup zones near entertainment districts also influenced the issue.

"Some drivers choose to drive home rather than pay (peak) fares or leave their vehicles overnight in the vicinity of these entertainment outlets," he said.

He added that policy coordination should extend beyond law enforcement agencies, involving local councils and nightlife venue operators in setting up designated pickup areas, overnight parking arrangements and voluntary breathalyser screening.

Many drivers underestimate how alcohol affects judgment and confidence.

"That is why driver education should also teach what impairment caused by alcohol consumption looks like in real situations, and how to manage peer pressure when faced with social drinking," he said.

Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research chairman Prof Dr Wong Shaw Voon said while drink-driving cases make up only a small number of total road fatalities annually, the behaviour remains highly dangerous because a single impaired driver could cause multiple casualties in one incident.

"Even if the numbers are small, the danger is extremely real. One impaired driver is enough to take lives. This is not about the percentage, it is about the severity of the outcome," he told *theSun* via phone.

Wong said Malaysia should begin evaluating systems that

prevent the act before the vehicle moves, rather than relying solely on enforcement after the offence.

"We should start exploring preventive in-vehicle technologies to reduce the risk of drink-driving."

On enforcement, Wong emphasised the principle of "Sure, Swift and Severe".

"Sure" means the evidence is clear and reliable. The testing devices must be accurate and trustworthy.

"Swift" means action must be taken immediately. If a summons arrives two or three years later, there is no deterrent effect.

"Severe" means the consequences must leave an impact, not physical punishment, but a penalty that truly reminds drivers of the danger they pose," he said.

However, Wong added that technology and penalties cannot replace awareness and responsibility.

"Ultimately, drink-driving is a personal decision.

"If someone chooses to drink, they must also choose how to get home (safely)."

## Over 100 fishermen affected by palm oil spill

**JOHOR BAHRU:** More than 100 fishermen, including 27 mussel breeders in Kampung Pasir Putih here, have been affected by an oil spill, believed to be palm oil, in the waters near their village.

Kampung Pasir Putih Fishermen's Association head Hamzah Allahdita said the spill, detected since Thursday afternoon, is estimated to have spread over a one-kilometre stretch and is suspected to have originated from a palm oil processing plant.

"The oil follows the water current. Not all areas are affected, but parts of the sea surface are clearly coated with a yellowish layer. Many fishing boats have also been stained with oil," he told *Bernama* when met at the village jetty on Friday.

He said while no mussels or fish have been reportedly affected, harvesting has been temporarily suspended for two to three days as a precaution to ensure food safety.

"The mussels are still alive, but when we clean them, they are oily.

"In that condition, customers won't buy them. We're worried the mussels would spoil and become unsellable," he said.

Hamzah added that fishermen and mussel farmers have had to suspend fishing and aquaculture activities while cleanup works are being carried out, disrupting their main source of income.

A mussel farm operator, Faizul Jumat Ismail, said his daily output of more than 300kg of seafood, including mussels, has now come to a complete halt.

"My estimated losses are about RM20,000 because we can't continue working or sell our products," he said.

"We're still waiting for the full report and for the cleanup to be completed. Hopefully, the impact of this spill doesn't drag on and affect our livelihoods for too long."

A *Bernama* check at the site found cleanup operations actively underway, involving about 30 workers using various methods, including water jets, flushing and removing oil residue from the sea.

A representative from the cleaning company said the process is expected to take two to three days to restore the coastal waters to a clean and safe condition for fishing activities.

Seri Alam district police chief ACP Mohd Sohaimi Ishak said 10 police reports have been lodged by fishermen over the incident, adding that investigations are ongoing.

## Fire breaks out at Petronas Tower 3



Firefighters brought the situation under control when the blaze was extinguished at 8.45am yesterday. - ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A fire broke out at Petronas Tower 3 here yesterday morning, which involved a restaurant located on the upper floor of the building.

Sentul Fire and Rescue station chief deputy fire superintendent II Mohd Hafizan Hassan said the station received a distress call at 6.41am and dispatched a team to the location.

"The Kuala Lumpur Operations Centre also sent fire engines from the Tun Razak and Hang Tuah stations," he said.

"The fire affected 30% of the restaurant on the 57th floor. The blaze was extinguished at 8.45am. There were no casualties, and we are now conducting investigations at the building," he said, adding that personnel had entered the building using the firefighter lift and put out the blaze using the

wet riser system.

Meanwhile, a bushfire that broke out Friday afternoon in Salak Tinggi has been completely extinguished as of yesterday morning - nearly 13 hours after fire-fighting operations started.

KLIA Fire and Rescue Department Zone 5 chief senior fire superintendent II Mohamad Issmanto Md Pono said initially, the fire involved a small 0.61ha bushland area, but the blaze spread to 8.09ha due to the hot weather and strong winds.

"The blaze was put out at 5.37am yesterday using a single open water flow of 1,000 feet at several fire spots and it did not involve any building structures or victims," he said yesterday.

On Friday, the department received a distress call at 4.32pm and upon arriving, firefighters



Smoke seen billowing from Petronas Tower 3 yesterday. - ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

found that a patch of bushland was on fire, which later spread.

The fire was brought under control at 2.57am yesterday, with 80% of the affected area extinguished and firefighters

combing through the remaining 20% to ensure there was no reignition. The operation involved 61 personnel, four Fire Rescue Tender engines, and one water tanker. - *Bernama*



# Positive response to 'wake-up call'

Report on boy slashing sibling over video game dispute prompts parents to enhance monitoring of screen time

BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Parents are now exercising closer supervision on their children and limiting their online time after a recent Johor case in which a six-year-old boy was slashed by his elder brother following a dispute over a video game.

Several parents who spoke to *theSun* said they were aware that unsupervised handphone, desktop or laptop usage may do harm and are taking measures to monitor such activity.

Housewife and mother of two Nurul Shuhada Ibrahim, 34, said she limits screen time for her children to just two hours daily, and they are only allowed to play computer games on weekends.

"I know how addictive games can be, even for adults. I let my kids play, but there has to be rules. I keep the devices in my room and only hand them out when chores and homework are done."

Nurul Shuhada said she makes it a point to talk to her children about what they play and how they behave after gaming.

"If I notice they start getting cranky or easily angered, I stop the session right away. I'll tell them to calm down, take a break and go outside to play. Parents need to observe, not just assume everything's fine," she added.

Another parent, business owner Azman Rahim, 40, said he believes open communication works better than punishment when it comes to managing



Parents acknowledge that the key to maintaining a safe environment is active monitoring, as prohibiting games outright may not be practical. - ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

children's emotions related to gaming.

He said completely banning games could backfire, as children might feel isolated from their peers who also play.

"I used to scold my son for playing too long, but I realised it only made him more secretive. Now, I sometimes sit with him and watch what he plays. It helps me understand why he enjoys it," he said.

"I don't want to completely ban games because it's part of how kids socialise now, but they need to know when to stop. If I see he's frustrated, I remind him that losing is normal."

For clerical staff Siti Aisyah Rahman, 37, her biggest challenge is enforcing limits when she and her husband are at work. She said her nine-year-old daughter enjoys playing Roblox and Minecraft with her friend.

"By the time we get home, the kids are

already on their tablets. It's not easy to monitor every minute, but I set clear rules. No games during school nights and none at the dining table.

"She plays harmless games, but I still check once in a while to see who she's chatting with. We also talk about what is real and what is make-believe. I always remind her that games are just games."

Siti Aishah admitted that she and her husband have relaxed their rules on gadget use, especially since the pandemic made online activities part of everyday life.

"I used to think gaming was bad, but after online learning became the norm, I realised it's how kids connect with one another.

"The key is moderation and presence. Kids behave better when they know their parents are nearby."

She added that the recent Batu Pahat case should serve as a reminder for families to be more involved, both emotionally and digitally.

"Children today grow up surrounded by screens. As parents, we can't control everything they see but we can control how much attention and guidance we give them."

On Oct 27, media reports highlighted a case involving a nine-year-old boy who allegedly attacked his six-year-old brother after experiencing hallucinations believed to be linked to the online game Roblox.

Johor police chief Datuk Ab Rahaman Arsad said initial investigations indicated that the older boy may have acted out of anger after his game was disrupted when the victim damaged his mobile phone, causing him to lose accumulated points.

He said the loss reportedly triggered the violent outburst, adding that the older sibling is believed to have heard "voices" from the game instructing him to harm his family members.

Both children are currently under the care of the Social Welfare Department.

## Parental supervision vital

**PETALING JAYA:** As concerns grow over how online games may influence the behaviour of children, *theSun* spoke to several youngsters about how their parents monitor their screen time and set rules for gaming at home.

A 13-year-old student from Petaling Jaya said he spends about one to two hours playing games each day, mostly after finishing his homework.

He said he prefers playing online with friends rather than alone and follows limits set by his parents.

"My parents tell me not to play for too long, especially on school days. If I play too long, my parents will ask me to stop and sometimes, they take my phone or console away for a while."

He said his parents do not usually watch or play games with him but keep track of what he plays.

"They don't allow me to play violent or scary games because they think those games are not good for me," he said, adding that he also enjoys watching movies and doing sports activities with his family and friends.

An 11-year-old girl from Ipoh *theSun* spoke to said her parents allow her to play games only on weekends.

"I can play games for two hours on Saturdays and Sundays. On school days, my mum doesn't let me use the phone, except for homework."

She said she mostly enjoys puzzle and cooking games and occasionally, she plays Roblox with her cousins as a way to stay connected and have fun together.

"My mum tells me not to chat with strangers in games, so I only play with people I know. She will sometimes sit next to me to see what I'm playing. If the game looks too violent, she'll tell me to delete it," she said, adding that her parents often remind her to balance screen time with other activities.

When she is not using her phone, she spends time outdoors.

"I like cycling with my friends in the evening. Playing games is fun, but I know I have to stop when my parents ask me to," she said. - **by Qirana Nabilla Mohd Rashidi**

# EDUCATION

FOCUS 2025

Education matters remain an important component of Malaysian society. Today the landscape is fast paced with new exciting developments in technology such as AI, coding, virtual reality, and cybersecurity, leading the way for changes in curriculum development. To showcase the latest and most updated content, we invite you join us in 2025, and be part of our Education Focus!



# Push for global AI body

Shanghai headquarters proposed

**BEIJING:** President Xi Jinping took centre stage at a meeting of Apec leaders yesterday to push a proposal for a global body to govern artificial intelligence and position China as an alternative to the United States on trade cooperation.

The comments were the first by the Chinese leader on an initiative Beijing unveiled this year, while the United States has rejected efforts to regulate AI in international bodies.

Xi said a World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation could set

governance rules and boost cooperation, making AI a “public good for the international community”.

In remarks published by Xinhua news agency, Xi said: “Artificial intelligence is of great significance for future development and should be made for the benefit of people in all countries and regions.”

Chinese officials have said the organisation could be based in Shanghai.

President Donald Trump did not attend the Apec leaders’ summit in the South Korean city

of Gyeongju, flying back to Washington after a meeting with Xi.

The meeting yielded a one-year deal to partially roll back trade and technology controls that had spiked tension between the world’s two biggest economies.

In Trump’s absence, analysts had expected Xi to use the Apec meeting to promote China as champion for its own brand of multilateral cooperation on trade and economic development.

While advanced chips made by California-based Nvidia are central to the AI boom, China-based developer DeepSeek has rolled out lower-cost models taken up by Beijing in a push for

what it calls “algorithmic sovereignty”.

Xi also urged Apec to promote the “free circulation” of green technologies, a cluster of industries from batteries to solar panels that China dominates.

Apec members approved a joint declaration and pacts on AI and the challenge of ageing populations at the meeting.

China will host the next Apec summit in Shenzhen, a major hub for manufacturing, from robotics to electric car production.

Xi said the city of nearly 18 million had been a fishing village until it boomed as one of China’s first special economic zones in the 1980s. – Reuters

## Indonesia-made submarine test fires torpedos

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia has reportedly conducted a torpedo firing test of its first autonomous submarine, known as the *Kapal Selam Otonom* on Thursday – marking a significant milestone in the nation’s maritime defence technology development.

The test held at the Fleet Command II Headquarters in Surabaya was witnessed by Defence Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin and monitored online by President Prabowo Subianto from Jakarta, according to a Defence Ministry statement.

The submarine developed by state-owned shipbuilding company PT PAL Indonesia is designed to provide a fast, efficient and effective solution to strengthen the country’s maritime combat capabilities, while complementing its fleet of conventional submarines.

“The Indonesian Navy and PT PAL will conduct assessments to further enhance its performance so that it can deliver greater benefits,” Sjafrie said.

He said Indonesia has now become the fourth country – after the United States, Russia and China – to successfully develop an autonomous submarine designed by locals.

The prototype was unveiled to the public during the 80th anniversary celebration of the Indonesian Armed Forces in Jakarta on Oct 5. – Bernama

## Ancient Vietnamese town works to restore tourism

**HOI AN:** Residents of Vietnam’s Unesco-listed ancient town of Hoi An began cleaning up as floodwaters receded after days of torrential rain that caused deadly flooding and widespread damage across the central region.

The deluge swamped Hoi An’s lantern-lit streets and centuries-old wooden houses, with residents saying they had never experienced flooding of such scale before.

As the water subsided, shop owners and residents cleared thick mud from storefronts, repaired furniture and worked to restore power in hopes of reopening soon to welcome tourists.

“Everything was swept away by the floodwaters, causing significant damage,” said Dang Quoc Dat, a 40-year-old restaurant owner.

“What is left was broken furniture that would need to be replaced. But I’m determined to overcome this challenge alongside other business owners in the town,” Dat said.

The central region, battered by heavy rains this week, saw flash floods and landslides that killed at least 29 people and left five



Hoi An art retailers cleaning paintings yesterday following floods in central Vietnam. – REUTERS/SPIC

missing, according to Vietnam’s disaster agency.

More than 22,000 houses remain submerged and nearly 100,000 residents were still experiencing power outages.

Vietnam has yet to release

official estimates of financial damage. Small shop owners reported losses amounting to hundreds of millions of dong.

“We have to keep trying, this is our livelihood. Giving up now just isn’t an option,” said Dao Thi Diu, a

38-year-old painting store owner.

Authorities warned that heavy rain is expected to continue in central Vietnam, with some areas forecast to receive over 700mm, potentially triggering renewed flooding. – Reuters

## Taipei opposition leader against defence budget hike

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan cannot afford to increase its defence budget to more than 3% of GDP, said the new leader of the island’s biggest opposition party.

The Kuomintang party (KMT) controls parliament and the government’s purse strings with the help of the Taiwan People’s Party and has close ties with China.

President Lai Ching-te, who leads the Democratic Progressive Party, aims to boost defence spending to more than 3% of GDP next year and 5% by 2030, following US pressure to spend more on defence.

“The US expectations far exceed what we can

reasonably afford,” said Cheng Li-wun, 55, before formally taking up the KMT chair yesterday.

“Taiwan isn’t an ATM, we really don’t have that much money,” she said.

“We certainly have the determination to defend Taiwan, but it’s not a blank cheque. That’s why I said we must have a reasonable defence budget.”

Lai’s government has proposed US\$31 billion (RM130 billion), or 3.32% of GDP, for defence spending next year.

The opposition-controlled legislature cut the 2025 general budget and froze some defence spending. – AFP



**HALLOW-KITTY ...** A Thai pet owner with his cat adorned with Halloween themed items during an event in Bangkok on Friday. – REUTERS/SPIC

## Joint US, Manila patrol upsets China military

**BEIJING:** China’s military said yesterday it tracked a joint patrol organised by the Philippines in the South China Sea on Thursday and Friday.

Washington and Manila have beefed up military cooperation, unveiling plans on Friday to form a new joint task force for areas that include the South China Sea.

Tian Junli, spokesperson for the Southern Theatre Command of the People’s Liberation Army, said the patrol, with unnamed partners, “seriously undermined regional peace and stability”.

“The theatre command forces remain on high alert and will safeguard territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests,” Tian said in a statement.

The Philippine embassy in Beijing did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

The armed forces of Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and the United States held a drill in the South China Sea on Thursday and Friday.

The US 7th Fleet said the exercise aimed to demonstrate “a collective commitment to strengthen regional and international cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific”. – Reuters



# Rio protesters denounce deadly raids

Majority support police action: Poll

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Authorities here said on Friday they had identified most of those killed in the deadliest police operation in Brazil's history, as protesters denounced the high number of casualties in the military-style raids.

The operation on Tuesday targeted the Comando Vermelho gang that controls the drug trade in several *favelas* – poor, densely populated neighbourhoods woven through the city's hilly terrain.

The raids killed 121 people, including four police officers. Felipe Curi, secretary of Rio's civil police, told reporters that by Friday morning, 99 of the dead had been identified.

Many of those killed had outstanding arrest warrants and criminal records.

State officials have been describing the operation as a success, with Governor Claudio Castro saying the "only real victims" were the slain officers as he claimed that all the others killed were criminals.

But the high death toll has drawn criticism from UN officials and security specialists.

"These acts may amount to unlawful killings and must all be investigated promptly, independently and

thoroughly," UN experts said.

Left-leaning social movements, including labour unions and human rights groups, gathered on Friday in the Penha *favela* complex, where the raids took place earlier this week, demanding an end to "military incursions" into *favelas* and accountability for the victims.

At the site, organisers handed out shirts with slogans such as "Stop killing us" and "Black lives matter".

At the protest, Rio councilwoman Monica Benicio said what happened could not be explained as something normal.

"This is not a public security policy, it is extermination, a massacre," said Benicio, widow of former councilwoman Marielle Franco, who was murdered by former police officers in 2018.

One protester shouted: "Everyone's blood is red. The only difference is that we live in a *favela*."

A public opinion survey by AtlasIntel published on Friday showed more than half of Brazilians, 55%, approved of the operation, with support rising to 62% in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

*Favela* residents also overwhelmingly backed the raids, the pollster said.

The figures underscore a complex political landscape in a country where violence remains a major public



Rakhel Rios, mother of 19-year-old Ravel Rios, one of those killed in the raids, reacts during his funeral in Rio de Janeiro. – REUTERS/SPIC

concern, but police killings have raised the alarm among human rights advocates.

Rio security officials continued to defend the raids.

Curi said: "We acted in the most transparent way possible. It was a legitimate action by the state after a year of investigations. We have nothing to hide."

Leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, whose administration said it was

caught off guard by the operation by Rio state police, called for coordinated work that targets the gangs without putting police and bystanders at risk.

Finance Minister Fernando Haddad said: "Beyond the territorial aspect and serving arrest warrants, which is important, if we don't suffocate the financing of organised crime, this won't work." – Reuters

## US anti-drug strategy scrutinised

**WASHINGTON:** Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee said the Trump administration had yet to provide details of its operations against drug cartels and their legal basis.

Strikes on alleged drug trafficking boats have killed dozens of people since early September, raising tension between Washington and Caracas.

In a rare bipartisan action, Republican Senator Roger Wicker and Democrat Jack Reed said in a statement they had not received information sought from the administration.

Wicker, of Mississippi, is the chairman and Reed, of Rhode Island, is the top Democrat on the committee, which oversees the US military.

The administration insists those targeted were transporting drugs, without providing evidence or publicly explaining the legal justification for the decision to attack the boats rather than stop them and arrest those on board.

President Donald Trump has also ordered a major military buildup in the Caribbean.

Wicker and Reed said they requested "Execute Orders" related to the anti-drug trafficking operations in a Sept 23 letter. In another letter on Oct 6, they asked for any written opinion regarding the legal basis for the operations.

The lawmakers said they had not received the requested information as of Friday.

Pentagon Press Secretary Kingsley Wilson said in an email: "Several of the requested documents were made available to the chairman, ranking member and their staff. Additionally, the department provided its fourth bipartisan briefing on these operations to Senate staff."

Trump denied on Friday that he was considering strikes inside Venezuela. – Reuters

## Tanzania president holds on to power

**DAR ES SALAAM:** Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan has won a landslide election victory, official results showed yesterday, after key candidates were jailed or barred from a vote that has triggered days of violent protests.

The final result showed Samia won 97.66% of the vote, dominating every constituency, the electoral commission announced on state television.

The main opposition party, Chadema, said hundreds of people have been killed by security forces since protests broke out on election day on Wednesday.

Samia was elevated from vice-president after the sudden death of her predecessor, John Magufuli in 2021.

She has faced opposition from parts of the army and Magufuli's



Samia has not been seen in public recently. – AFP/PIIC

allies and sought to cement her position with an emphatic win, analysts said.

Rights groups said she

oversaw a "wave of terror" ahead of the vote, including a string of abductions that escalated in the final days.

Chadema was barred from taking part in the election and its leader put on trial for treason.

Despite a heavy security presence, election day descended into chaos as crowds took to the streets, tearing down her posters and attacking police and polling stations, leading to an internet shutdown and curfew.

A Chadema spokesman said "around 700" people had been killed, based on figures gathered from a network checking hospitals and health clinics.

A security source and diplomat in Dar es Salaam both said deaths were "in the hundreds".

Samia has not made any public statement since the unrest began. – AFP

## 24,000 tonnes of Gaza aid collected

**NEW YORK:** The United Nations and its humanitarian partners have collected more than 24,000 tonnes of aid from the Gaza Strip crossings since the ceasefire came into effect on Oct 10.

"More people have also been able to access this aid, which includes food, medicine and medical supplies, supplements and shelter materials, through the resumption of community and household-based distributions and services," said Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the UN secretary-general.

There has been a significant reduction in the interception or looting of supplies, he said, adding that between Oct 10 and 28, only 5% of collected supplies were reportedly intercepted, compared with about 80% between May 19 and Oct 9.

He said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs (Ocha) expected the amount of supplies intercepted to continue to decline.

"We call for all crossing points to be open and more UN agencies and organisations authorised to bring in aid supplies."

Ocha said humanitarian partners continue to scale-up efforts despite reported Israeli airstrikes across the strip and reminded the Israeli military of its obligation not to target civilians and aid workers.

On the education front, humanitarian partners are expanding their interventions to restore minimum teaching and learning conditions for over 630,000 children and supporting the rehabilitation of more than 90 classrooms in Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis, out of over 2,000 classrooms that require rehabilitation across the Gaza Strip. – Bernama

# theSun<sup>day</sup> Special

NOVEMBER 2, 2025

## Local digital detox: Isolated home rentals to escape city life

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“By curating what we consume, we create space for peace, clarity and real connection.”

# Local digital detox: Isolated home rentals to escape city life

BY DAYANA SOBRI

**F**OR the past 20 years or so, screen fatigue has become real and burnout feels inevitable. The desire to disconnect is no longer a luxury – it is a necessity. Across Malaysia, an increasing number of urbanites are intentionally logging off, not just from their devices, but also from the relentless pace of city life. A recent survey by Statista found that Malaysians spend an average of nine hours and 18 minutes daily on the internet. It's no wonder that digital detoxing has become more than just a buzzword – it's an emerging lifestyle choice.

But going off the grid doesn't require an international flight or a costly resort stay. Tucked away in Malaysia's hills, forests and islands are homes designed to help visitors unplug, breathe and simply exist. Often off-limits to strong mobile reception and wi-fi, these remote sanctuaries are proving to be vital spaces for mental reset. Here are some home rentals across the country where the only notifications you'll hear are the rustling of leaves or the call of distant hornbills.

## Into the clouds: Mountain hideouts in Janda Baik and Cameron Highlands

There's something about altitude that lends itself to stillness. The village of Janda Baik, nestled in the Bentong district, is a favourite among Klang Valley dwellers in search of cool air and calm weekends. A short drive from Kuala Lumpur, this forest-fringed enclave has seen a rise in eco-cabins and minimalistic wooden homes, many designed without television or internet by intention.

Some homes sit beside gushing brooks, offering the sort of white noise that replaces the need for playlists. Others perch above the treeline, where early mornings reveal mists rolling through the valleys. Electricity and running water are basic comforts, but mod cons like microwaves and smart TVs are often absent – a deliberate design to let nature lead the day.

Further north in Cameron Highlands, off-the-beaten-track homes near Blue Valley or Bertam Valley provide a more rustic experience compared with the tourist-heavy Tanah Rata. These are

homes where your mobile phone might show “no service” and your entertainment comes in the form of firewood, books and stargazing.

## Lakeside silence: Recharging by the waters of Temenggor and Chenderoh

For some, healing comes not through silence but through the slow rhythms of water. In Perak, the man-made lakes of Temenggor and Chenderoh have seen an uptick in sustainable rentals built along the water's edge – many of which are operated by local communities.

In Chenderoh, one of Malaysia's oldest hydroelectric dams, several private homes-turned-retreats offer a tranquil experience. These lake houses often run on solar power or rainwater harvesting systems and nights are spent around oil lamps or small campfires. Bird calls at

dawn and the distant splashes of freshwater fish replace the hum of air conditioners or morning traffic.

Across Temenggor, access often requires a short boat ride. The journey itself serves as a boundary – a crossing from digital dependency into a space governed by sunrises, swims and slow cooking. Mobile coverage is intentionally poor, and generators are sometimes turned off by 10pm. It's a place where digital devices naturally lose their grip.

## Island isolation: Off-grid living in Langkawi and Semporna

While Langkawi is known for duty-free goods and five-star resorts, its less developed areas still offer seclusion. On the island's northern and eastern flanks, there are privately owned chalets and restored *kampung* houses hidden deep within jungle clearings. Some of these require walking through forest trails or boat rides along mangrove estuaries.

Solar panels often power essentials and there is an unspoken encouragement among hosts to leave phones in drawers. Afternoons are spent cooking with local herbs or napping in hammocks, not doomscrolling. Visitors report improved sleep cycles, reduced anxiety and heightened sensory awareness after just a few days.



Embun Luxury Villas



Temple Tree Heritage Resort



Sementra Nature Resort

In Sabah, some of the most remote homes are found along the Semporna archipelago, where stays on water chalets or stilts offer no wi-fi and limited connectivity. Life here moves with the tides. At night, guests are lulled to sleep by the sounds of waves beneath their floorboards, rather than blue light streaming from screens.

#### Where to unplug: Remote homes that help you switch off

While the desire to escape is universal, the settings that enable true disconnection are often tucked away in Malaysia's quieter corners. From rainforest chalets to floating lake homes, here are several isolated stays designed to support digital detoxing – not by luxury, but by the intentional absence of modern distractions.

#### Janda Baik, Pahang: Forest air and stream-fed silence

Set just under an hour from Kuala Lumpur, Janda Baik has long been a favourite for those seeking cooler temperatures and greenery. Embun Luxury Villas is a prime example – designed with open decks, no televisions and minimal digital interference. Its proximity to brooks and forest trails means mornings are spent in silence, not scrolls. At Tiarasa Escapes, treehouses and safari tents are nestled under century-old trees, and visitors are encouraged to leave their devices behind and explore on foot.

#### Langkawi, Kedah: Unhurried island living

Beyond the main tourist areas, Langkawi's northern coast holds secret stays that help slow things down. At Temple Tree Heritage Resort, heritage houses from around Malaysia have been reassembled into a stay that intentionally excludes televisions and promotes screen-free evenings. Meanwhile, Ambong Pool Villas offers rainforest-wrapped retreats where mobile signal drops and daily rhythms return – hammocks replace emails and books take the place of browsers.

#### Gopeng, Perak: Jungle therapy with limestone views

Though Perak has several well-known lake escapes, Gopeng's position within a lush, tropical jungle makes it a strong contender for digital disconnection. Se-

mentra Nature Resort, nestled between limestone cliffs and jungle ponds, offers chalets with no wi-fi and a soundscape dominated by frogs and cicadas. At Earth Camp, eco-lodges built from natural materials provide solar lighting and communal kitchens, encouraging meaningful conversations away from screens.

#### Semporna, Sabah: Floating calm in the archipelago

Far from the mainland, the waters of Semporna provide unique homes on stilts or pontoons. Aqua Lodge, built entirely above sea level, offers basic floating chalets powered by solar energy. Mobile reception is weak and island power shuts down at night – leaving guests to enjoy uninterrupted sunsets and moonlit tides. For a truly off-grid experience, Kalapuan Island homestays allow visitors to live among the *Bajau Laut* community, disconnected from the digital world and immersed in ocean rhythms.

“When your phone stops dictating your day, you rediscover the joy of being present.”

#### Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan: Kampung quiet and heritage living

Often overlooked, Kuala Pilah offers some of the most grounded *kampung*-style retreats in Peninsular Malaysia. Restored wooden homes built on stilts sit on private land surrounded by fruit trees and hills. Some are over a century old, with no TVs or wi-fi and minimal electricity use. The nights are dark, the air thick with the scent of lemon grass and the quiet is absolute. These homes let you relive a slower, analogue version of rural Malaysian life.

#### Padawan Highlands, Sarawak: High-altitude solitude

Sarawak's Padawan Highlands, less explored than Borneo's national parks, offer cool-climate homes hidden deep within *Bidayuh* villages. Many of these



Kalapuan Island homestays

homestays are accessible only via jeep or long hikes. With no phone towers nearby, guests experience a full digital blackout. Lighting comes from oil lamps, cooking is done over wood fires and evenings are spent in conversation or song. In these quiet highlands, time loses its urgency.

#### Why Malaysians are seeking digital retreats

Mental health experts have long advocated for periodic disconnection as a tool for psychological well-being. According to a 2023 study by the Health Ministry, 29% of Malaysians aged 16 and above experience mental health issues, citing stress and digital overload as contributing factors. The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission also reported a spike in screen time post-pandemic, with 88.7% of users accessing the internet via smartphones.

Digital detoxes can be powerful when combined with nature immersion. It's not just about avoiding social media – it's about engaging the senses again: Listening to natural sounds, feeling temperature shifts or watching clouds move. These cues help rewire attention spans and emotional regulation.

For those working in high-pressure urban settings, these retreats offer not just a break but a recalibration. It's telling that

some rental homes now request guests to sign “digital release” pledge agreements to go screen-free during their stay. Guests who comply report improved mood, deeper conversations and higher levels of presence.

#### Finding your peace again

The idea of a digital detox can seem daunting, especially when modern life is so deeply enmeshed with devices. But the growing number of isolated homes across Malaysia presents a practical entry point. These spaces, often built with care, humility and harmony with their surroundings, offer something cities can't: space to pause.

No two detoxes are the same. For some, it's about healing burnout. For others, it's about finding time to write, reconnect with family or simply stare into the void of a jungle canopy. Regardless of the reason, the act of retreating is an act of reclaiming attention – one that may just offer clarity in a cluttered world.

As we rethink wellness beyond just green juices or gym memberships and consider digital boundaries and time alone, these hidden homes may hold the blueprint for a new kind of balance. The good news? They're already here, scattered across Malaysia's lakes, mountains and islands – quietly waiting.

# Think you're taking care of your eyes? Think again

BY HANNEF ESQUANDER



Optometrists play a vital role in primary eye care, helping Malaysians maintain healthy vision at every stage of life.



“Regular screening is critical because early signs of glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy can be subtle or non-existent.”

Ahmad

**I**F the eyes are the window to the soul, then we should do everything we can to make sure that window remains clear and open. When it starts to get blurry and the ‘window’ seems to be fogged up, it could be a sign of underlying eye health issues. It is a reminder to take our vision seriously, as a clear vision is not just about seeing the world, but about fully experiencing it.

“Early signs of serious eye conditions like glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy can be subtle or non-existent. That is why regular screening is critical. For glaucoma, peripheral vision loss often occurs gradually. Macular degeneration may begin with blurriness in the central vision or difficulty seeing fine

detail. Diabetic retinopathy can present with floaters, blurred vision or dark areas in the visual field. All of these conditions, if detected early, can be managed effectively to prevent vision loss,” said Ahmad Fadhullah, president of the Association of Malaysian Optometrists (AMO).

AMO is the national body representing optometrists in Malaysia. Established in 1984, its mission is to uphold high standards in optometric care, advocate for the profession and support public awareness about the importance of eye health. AMO plays a key role in working alongside government agencies, healthcare institutions, academic institutions and NGOs to ensure quality eye care is accessible to all Malaysians.



“The most common eye conditions we see include uncorrected refractive errors (such as myopia, hyperopia and astigmatism), dry eyes, cataracts and digital eye strain. Among the elderly, we often detect early signs of glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. Prevention starts with regular eye examinations, good visual habits, UV protection, reducing screen time, maintaining a balanced diet rich in antioxidants and managing chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension that can affect vision,” he said.

For children, an eye exam is recommended at least once before starting school and then annually. Adults should have their eyes examined every two years. Those over 60 or individuals with risk factors such as diabetes, high blood pressure or a family history of eye disease should get their eyes checked annually. Regular eye exams can detect vision issues early, often before symptoms appear.

Now, more than ever, we should start managing the time that we spend in front of screens. Prolonged screen time can lead to digital eye strain or computer vision syndrome, with symptoms such as dry eyes, blurred vision, headaches and neck or shoulder pain. “We recommend following the 20-20-20 rule – every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. Adjust screen brightness, use proper lighting, maintain an ergonomic posture and blink more frequently to relieve dryness,” he advised.

On top of that, we also have to watch what we eat because diet plays a vital role in maintaining good vision and overall eye health. Nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids, lutein, zeaxanthin, zinc and vitamins C and E help reduce the risk of age-related vision problems like macular degeneration and cataracts. Leafy green vegetables, carrots, citrus fruits, nuts and fish like salmon are particularly good for eye health. Staying hydrated is equally important, especially for those experiencing dry eyes.

“Follow the 20-20-20 rule – every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds to reduce digital eye strain.”

“There is a common myth that makes a lot of people believe that wearing glasses makes their vision worse. This is untrue. Glasses correct your vision but do not worsen your eyes. Another misconception is that you only need an eye check if you are having problems. In reality, many serious eye diseases show no symptoms in the early stages, so preventive eye care is essential. Also, blue light from screens is often blamed for permanent eye damage, but there is no conclusive evidence. It mainly causes eye strain, which is manageable,” he said, dispelling the myths.



Early detection and timely management can make a significant difference, not just in preserving vision but also in detecting underlying health issues.

The field of optometry continues to evolve rapidly with new advancements in eye care and vision correction. Some of the most recent ones include myopia control treatments for children, such as orthokeratology lenses and atropine drops, as well as advanced contact lens materials that enhance comfort and oxygen flow. Tele-optometry and AI-based diagnostic tools are becoming increasingly prevalent, enabling optometrists to detect and manage eye conditions remotely with greater accuracy. These innovations are bridging the gap between early detection and timely intervention.

#### Optometrist vs Ophthalmologist

“A lot of people cannot tell the difference between an optometrist and an ophthalmologist. An optometrist is a primary eye care provider trained to perform vision and eye exams, prescribe glasses or contact lenses, detect eye abnormalities and manage certain eye diseases. An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor who can provide full medical and surgical eye care, including more complex cases and eye surgeries,” he explained.

Recently, AMO launched the College of Optometrists, a landmark initiative under the organisation’s 40th anniversary celebrations, to further elevate professional development and governance in the field. AMO is also closely aligned with the new Allied Health Professions Act (Act 774), which officially recognises optometrists as regulated healthcare professionals under Malaysian law. This progress marks a significant step in empowering optometrists to contribute more actively to the national healthcare system.

“For those who have never had an eye exam but are experiencing vision changes, they should not wait any longer. Vision changes could be due to something simple like needing corrective lenses, but they can also be an early warning sign of more serious issues. Visit a qualified optometrist for a comprehensive eye exam. Early detection and timely management can make a significant difference, not just in preserving vision but also in detecting underlying health issues like diabetes or high blood pressure,” he said, emphasising the importance of early action.



## Habits for healthy eyes

- 1. Step outside**  
Spending time outdoors, especially for children, helps slow the progression of myopia (short-sightedness). Natural light and looking at distant objects relax the eyes.
- 2. Take screen breaks**  
Apart from the 20-20-20 rule, try using the “look, blink, stretch” method: Look away from your screen, blink slowly 10 times, then stretch your body to reduce tension.
- 3. Keep lenses clean**  
Dirty spectacles or contact lenses can strain your eyes. Always clean glasses with a microfibre cloth and use approved contact lens solutions.
- 4. Check your lighting**  
Avoid reading or working in dim light. Make sure light sources are behind you when reading printed material and behind your screen when using a computer.
- 5. Don't ignore redness or irritation**  
Persistent redness, dryness or eye discomfort could signal infection or allergies. Avoid self-medicating with over-the-counter drops and see an optometrist instead.
- 6. Get enough sleep**  
Lack of sleep can lead to dry, puffy or twitching eyes. Aim for 7 to 8 hours of rest daily for better eye comfort and recovery.
- 7. Protect your eyes outdoors**  
Wear sunglasses that block 100% of UVA and UVB rays. Prolonged exposure to sunlight can increase the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration.

**S**CROLL through Instagram and stumble upon @syahirah-stargazer. You'll find yourself transported into a universe of swirling galaxies, radiant nebulae and delicate poems that seem to bridge the infinite vastness of space with the intimacy of human emotions.

Behind these creations is Syahirah Stargazer, a Kelantan-born English and mathematics teacher who is also Malaysia's only member of the prestigious International Association of Astronomical Arts (IAAA).

Her art, often described as "cosmic impressionism", is more than just pretty galaxies on canvas. It's a marriage of science and imagination, rooted in real astronomical data but translated through vivid brushstrokes and lyrical verses.

"Science and creativity are two sides of the same coin. Even Einstein said imagination encircles the world. I truly believe art and astronomy thrive on curiosity and wonder," she told theSunday Special.



Syahirah is an internationally recognised space artist and poet.

## A splash of stardust and a **stroke of genius**

*Meet Syahirah Stargazer, Malaysia's only member of the International Association of Astronomical Arts, who blends science, imagination and emotion in her celestial works*

**Art is the bridge between imagination and knowledge."**

BY ASHRAF WAHAB

Syahirah's love affair with the night sky began in Kampung Sungai Sok, a rural pocket of Kuala Krai, Kelantan, where the absence of city lights meant the heavens revealed themselves in full splendour. As a child, she would pore over astronomy books borrowed from her school library while eagerly flipping through newspaper clippings her father brought home.

One night, her father surprised her with a telescope when she was just 14.

"He woke me up in the middle of the night to show me. It was the sweetest moment," she recalled with a smile.

That telescope became her portal to the universe, cementing a fascination that would follow her well into adulthood.

Yet the path wasn't always starlit. Language barriers marked her early schooling years and her drawings – especially anime figures were once confiscated in secondary school because drawings of human figures were discouraged. Instead of demoralising her, these hurdles only sharpened her resolve.

"I took it as a challenge to never give up on my passion, no matter the circumstances," she said.

**Between poetry and planets**

What makes Syahirah's work particularly captivating is how she doesn't just paint the cosmos – she writes it too. Her poetry, often inspired by the same celestial phenomena as her art, acts as a companion to her canvases.

"Poetry adds another layer of depth and emotion. It lets viewers experience the subject visually and intellectually, creating a more contemplative journey," she explained.

Her inspirations range from meteor showers to astrophysics textbooks, but the common thread is the human experience woven into the fabric of the cosmos. A black hole might mirror the sensation of being trapped within one's thoughts, while a pulsar becomes a distant lighthouse guiding the heart across galaxies.

Her favourite poet, Lang Leav, also taught her how vulnerability could be art. Syahirah herself started writing poems during her time in teacher training college, when she struggled with depression.

"All the unspeakable emotions I had begged to be expressed and they emerged as poems," she shared quietly.

On canvas, Syahirah's style is anything but static. She adopts "cosmic impressionism", also known as "swirly art", within the IAAA to interpret astronomical wonders. Unlike hyperrealistic space photography, her work focuses on movement, colour and light – capturing the essence rather than the exactness of a galaxy or nebula.

Still, her art isn't divorced from science. She frequently consults NASA and ESA telescope data and sometimes collaborates with astronomers and astrophotographers to ensure her work remains grounded in reality.

"I make sure details like constellations or the orientation of a star reflect actual observations. But then I allow creativity to fill in the emotion," she said.

Her dual approach ensures that her art speaks to both dreamers and scientists.



"For those without a scientific background, art is the bridge. For those in STEM, my work shows how imagination can complement knowledge," she explained.

#### From Kelantan to the global stage

When Syahirah applied to join the IAAA, she wasn't sure she'd make the cut. But she did and in doing so, became the first and only Malaysian in the association.

"It was one of the proudest moments of my life," she said.



Arts have helped open many doors for Syahirah.

The Kelantan-born artist and teacher blends science and imagination in her space-themed works.

As Dark Sky Malaysia's Astroartist, Syahirah advocates preserving natural night skies through art.



That milestone opened doors not just for her but also for Malaysia. In 2021, she initiated a collaboration between Planetarium Negara and the IAAA, bringing international space art into the local scene. Today, she also serves as assistant director of the IAAA's STEAM Outreach Team, promoting the fusion of science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics.

Recognition, however, comes with responsibility.

"I feel it's my duty to show the world what Malaysian artists can contribute. It's about breaking barriers between science and art and inspiring others to find their own paths into astronomy," she said.

By profession, Syahirah is an English teacher. Her students, she admitted, were once shocked to discover their teacher was also an internationally recognised space artist and poet.

"They were genuinely excited and asked me countless questions," she laughed.

"They take pride in telling others that their English teacher is also a space artist."

Teaching has sharpened her ability to communicate complex ideas. Just as she explains grammar rules in class, she explains nebulae and comets through her brushstrokes and verses.

"Every artwork carries my intimate perspective. I love sharing the story behind each piece, from the spark of inspiration to the final brushstroke," she said.

#### Advocacy under dark skies

Not all of Syahirah's art is confined to canvas or paper. She is also active with Dark Sky Malaysia, an organisation fighting against light pollution. As their designated astroartist, she highlights how preserving natural night skies benefits astronomy, ecosystems and human well-being.

"Light pollution isn't just about losing sight of stars. It affects animals, plants and even our sleep cycles. Art helps bring that message across in a way data charts sometimes cannot," she said.

Despite her international success, Syahirah remains grounded and ambitious. She hopes to one day witness the auroras – both Borealis and Australis and translate their colours into new works. She also dreams of becoming an astronomical artist-researcher to further integrate art with scientific research in Malaysia.

"I want to build an ecosystem where art and space science can coexist," she said.

"I hope to train future space artists who will collaborate closely with scientists."

When asked which of her paintings she would launch into space, she didn't hesitate. It would be *The Moon-etched Heart*, a deeply personal piece born during a dark period in her life, which carries a message to keep looking up, no matter how hard it gets.

At its heart, Syahirah's work isn't just about galaxies far away – it's about the cosmos within. Her paintings and poems are as much reflections of her inner struggles and triumphs as they are of the universe's grandeur.

"Whenever people encounter my work, I want them to feel wonder. To realise how extraordinary it is that we've learned so much about the universe and to see the beauty of our place within it," she said.

For Syahirah, every brushstroke and every verse is a reminder: the universe is vast, but through imagination, we can all find our own way to touch the stars. Perhaps, it's like those lyrics to that one Taylor Swift song: "Don't you see the starlight, starlight? Don't you dream impossible things?"

**W**HEN it comes to personal finance, many of us feel like we're climbing a mountain without a map. Bills pile up, rent takes a big bite out of our salary and the idea of investing or planning for retirement feels like something only the rich can afford. But what if there was a simple framework to help us figure out what to do first, what to prioritise and how to grow steadily from there?

That's where the financial planning pyramid comes in.

Darshini Nadarajan is a certified financial planner (CFP) with 5 years of experience in the financial services industry.

"The financial planning pyramid is a framework that organises your financial goals in order of importance. It begins with the most basic needs before moving to advanced goals, starting with tracking your cash flow and building an emergency fund and progressing to long-term aims like legacy planning and wealth distribution," she explained.

It's essentially money management, with a structure that builds a strong base before moving up. Think of it like Maslow's hierarchy of needs – except instead of food, shelter and safety, you're stacking cash flow, insurance, investments and finally, legacy planning.



**The best time to build your financial pyramid was yesterday, the second-best is today."**

Darshini

#### Why a pyramid, not a ladder?

The pyramid concept matters because you can't skip steps without risk.

"If you skip a step in the pyramid, the consequences could be dire," Darshini said.

For example, say you're 30, healthy, confident and eager to grow wealth. Instead of buying insurance, you throw all your savings into stocks and crypto. Suddenly, at 31, you're diagnosed with cancer and can't work for months. Your investments, barely a year old, won't cover your commitments or lifestyle. Without protection, you'll burn through your savings and have to start from scratch.

That's why the pyramid begins with the foundations first.

While some versions have five or six layers, Darshini simplifies it into four:



# Building your financial pyramid: A guide to money that lasts

BY ASHRAF WAHAB

## 1. Cash flow and emergency fund

This is the base. Know where your money goes, track expenses and make sure you have a safety net. The 50/30/20 rule works well here: 50% of your income for needs (rent, food, utilities), 30% for wants (dining out, hobbies, entertainment) and 20% for financial goals (savings and investments).

If your needs creep beyond 50%, cut back on wants or rethink your lifestyle. But here's the golden advice: Never compromise on saving 20% for your financial goals, as this will have long-term repercussions.

## 2. Protection

This layer is about insurance. Malaysians are often underinsured. A 2024 report by the Life Insurance Association of Malaysia showed policy penetration per capita of only about 60%, while PIDM found that one in three working adults lacks personal protection.

Protection should not be seen as optional; it's essential. Whether it's life, medical or critical illness coverage, it gives peace of mind and safeguards what you've built.

## 3. Wealth accumulation

Once the basics are covered, move into wealth-building. Explore investment options suited to your risk appetite.

**Low risk:** Fixed deposits, high-interest savings accounts, insurance savings plans, bonds

**Moderate risk:** Bond funds, dividend stocks, mutual funds, ETFs, REITs

**High risk:** Stocks, cryptocurrencies, startup equity

Don't worry if you're starting small. Robo-advisors and mutual funds let you start with as little as RM100 while still getting diversification.

## 4. Legacy planning

At the top is leaving something behind – property, an inheritance or even a will. Statistics show that over 80% of Malaysians don't have a valid will. In May 2025, the media reported that RM13.3 billion in unclaimed funds is held in Malaysia.

Families often struggle not because assets don't exist, but because no one knows where they are. As Darshini stressed, something as simple as nominating beneficiaries for your EPF, PRS or insurance policies can save your loved ones months of heartache.

#### Why Malaysians slip on the pyramid

Money habits are not built in isolation; culture plays a role. Darshini said that it stems from low financial literacy and the FOMO and YOLO culture among the younger generation.

Social media amplifies the problem. Seeing friends splurge on holidays or gadgets makes many feel pressured to keep up. That's why younger Malaysians often skip protection and jump straight to investing or worse, overspend entirely.

The consequences are real. Between 2019 and April 2023, nearly 19% of bankruptcies involved those aged 25 to 34, while 38% were aged 35 to 44. Roughly half were due to personal loans.

When should you start? The short answer is now. One of the biggest misconceptions Malaysians have about financial planning is that you need to be wealthy to begin.

"To reach your financial goals, you must start planning from the moment you start earning. Small steps will lead to a big impact in the long run," Darshini said firmly.

If you're in your 20s or 30s, focus on cash flow, emergency funds and basic protection. If you're in your 40s or 50s and feel late, don't panic. The best time to build your pyramid was yesterday; the second-best is today.

While Malaysia doesn't yet have dedicated apps to track your pyramid progress, you can rely on existing tools. Budgeting apps like Money Lover or Pocket Expense can help with cash flow. For investments, StashAway or MYTHEO offer easy entry points. For protection or legacy planning, nothing beats sitting down with a licensed financial planner.

When you have a good agent or consultant, they will conduct a needs-based analysis and advise you on the proper coverage.

#### The golden rule

If there's one thing Darshini wants Malaysians to remember, it's this.

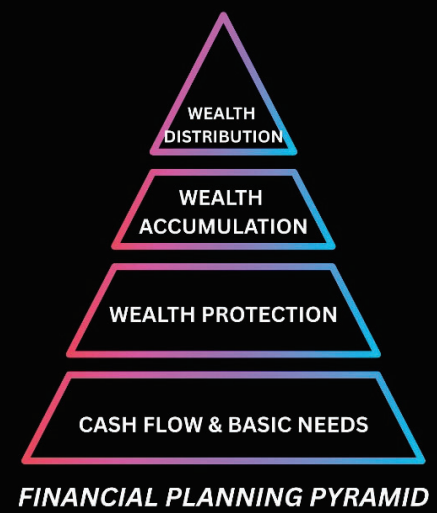
"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

Equip yourself with financial literacy. Review your pyramid every year or when your life stage changes, such as getting married, having children, buying property or switching jobs.

Most importantly, don't wait until you have "enough money" to start. The pyramid isn't a luxury reserved for high-income earners. It's a framework for anyone who wants financial security, peace of mind and a future worth looking forward to.

Because at the end of the day, building your financial pyramid isn't just about stacking wealth, it's about making sure that when life throws the unexpected at you, you've already built something sturdy enough to stand.

#### THE HIERARCHY OF FINANCIAL NEEDS



# Plants you **can't kill** even if you tried

BY HANNEF ESQUANDER



**S**TILL thinking about all the innocent plants that you have killed in the past years? The guilt may still haunt you, but giving up is not part of the plan, because you have learnt from your mistakes and know exactly what to do. Let's start with choosing the right plant that can survive in your space and thrive along with your busy lifestyle. You may have already made mistakes with the orchids and succulents. This time, you are fully aware that you do not always have the time to repot and your frequent work trips demand houseplants that will still be happy to see you (and still alive) when you return.

Consider the ZZ plant if you have a really severe case of a black thumb. Officially known as *Zamioculcas zamiifolia*, this plant hails from East Africa and is often dubbed the king of the indestructible plants. It is very resilient, able to survive common houseplant challenges such as drought, low light and low humidity. This makes it a popular choice for both beginner and busy plant owners.

The ZZ plant thrives in medium to bright indirect light but can also tolerate low-light conditions. Here is the good news – it only needs watering every two to three weeks indoors. Slightly more frequent watering is required if it is placed in bright sunlight. However, pet owners should be cautious as this plant is toxic to cats and dogs.

The snake plant, also known as mother-in-law's tongue, is well-known for its immortality. It is almost impossible to kill a snake plant. This slow-growing plant is perfect for beginners or anyone who tends to forget about their houseplants. With its air-purifying qualities and minimal care needs, the snake plant is a tough,



The hardy ZZ plant thrives even with minimal care.



“Compared to plants like the snake plant or pothos, Oxalis can be slightly more sensitive.”

Ezra

Aloe vera, known as the 'miracle plant', has been used for its healing properties since ancient times. Native to northern Africa, it is the most popular of over 400 aloe species. Loved for its soothing gel and ease of care, aloe is a favourite among succulent fans.

This slow-growing, spiky-leaved succulent thrives in bright indirect light and needs water only when the soil is dry. Ideal as a houseplant, it can also be grown outdoors in warm climates. Larger plants offer more potent gel and mature aloes often produce baby offshoots that can be replanted. Despite its healing properties, Aloe vera is toxic for house pets.

Once you have gained enough confidence with these plants to move up to the next level, Ezra Hakimi, a plant enthusiast and hobbyist, has just the right plant to recommend. One of the easiest plants to care for in his garden is *Oxalis triangularis*, commonly known as purple shamrock. It is a gorgeous plant with triangle-shaped leaves that open during the day and close at night, almost as if it's alive and has its own routine. It also produces soft pink or white flowers.

He said: “It is relatively easy to care for if it gets enough light. Compared to plants like the snake plant or pothos, *Oxalis* can be slightly more sensitive, as it prefers bright, indirect light, regular watering and may go dormant. But seeing the leaves flutter like butterflies in the wind is definitely worth that extra effort.”

Aloe vera is loved for both its healing gel and sculptural beauty.



stylish choice for any indoor space. Its tall, upright leaves with striking green patterns make it a bold addition to any room. It thrives in bright indirect light or low light with fortnightly watering.

Another plant that requires a lot of effort to kill is *Epipremnum aureum*, better known as pothos. This hardy trailing vine gets its nickname from its ability to thrive in low light and survive both under- and overwatering. It is best to water it only when the soil is completely dry, making it an easy-care choice for beginners or those who are not committed.

Beyond the classic green pothos, varieties like the golden pothos offer a splash of colour with their green and yellow leaves. As with many houseplants, keep it out of reach of pets.

The rubber plant is known for its glossy, dark green leaves often tinged with pinkish-red accents. It will add a bold touch to any indoor space. It does well in bright indirect light but can also adapt to lower light conditions. Watering should be done about once a week or when the soil feels dry to the touch. Like many popular houseplants, the rubber plant is toxic and best kept out of reach of curious pets.



“Our produce, our street food, our accessibility – it’s priceless.”

Sherson

## The way Malaysians taste

Preserving the local flavours with chef Sherson Lian

BY AQILAH NAJWA JAMALUDDIN

it would be to miss the point. Instead, he celebrates its fluidity.

“Malaysian cuisine is so unique because of the variety,” he said. “Not just the individuality of each culture but the way they have grown together. You see it clearly in *Peranakan* food, which blends Malay and Chinese influences.”

“But even then, it’s not just one thing. The northern *Peranakan* flavours carry Thai influence, the southern ones lean Javanese. That’s just one small corner of the whole map.”

What fascinates him most is not the static recipe but the invisible thread that connects it to people’s lives. He is quick to admit there is no single way to define authenticity.

“Who’s to say which version of *sambal* is right? Or whose grandmother’s curry is correct? Our cuisine was born out of a social movement. It was never meant to stay the same.”

Still, for all its changeability,

there is something sacred in keeping flavour memory alive. He believes this can be done through intention – by understanding culinary history and choosing to carry forward the parts that resonate.

“It’s about giving it a home in your kitchen. Whether you’re in a restaurant or cooking for your family, that’s how you honour it.”

It is this philosophy that guides his cooking – a blend of reverence and resourcefulness.

Take his approach to batch cooking, for example. It is something he shares often, not as a shortcut but as a way to balance tradition with real life.

“If I make *rempah nyonya*, I’ll plan it around a weekend when my family is around. Then it becomes an activity. I get the help I need, I pass on the knowledge and we spend time together.

Sherson believes Malaysian flavours are best preserved through everyday cooking and shared family moments.

**I**N Malaysia, flavour is not just something you taste. It’s something you grow up with, passed quietly from one generation to the next through steam, spice and instinct.

It lives in the way rice is washed, in how *sambal* is stirred, in the unspoken rhythm between mother and child at the stove.

For chef Sherson Lian, that inheritance runs deep.

Food has always been his first language – intuitive, emotional and unapologetically local. From television sets to home kitchens, his career has revolved around one thing: making people feel something through what they eat.

He is best known for bridging the gap between tradition and the modern Malaysian identity. His dishes aren’t rigid recreations of the past, but living memories, reinterpreted with flair and served with feeling. Yet even as his reach grows beyond borders, what grounds him remains unchanged.

The first thing he remembers about food is soy sauce – not just any kind, but the good one, drizzled over *kampung* eggs in the morning light of his childhood kitchen.

It was not grand or complicated, just deeply comforting. That, in many ways, has always been his approach to cooking.

“I remember the quality,” he said thoughtfully. “*Kampung* eggs with really good soy sauce. Even now, when I have boiled Chinese soups, I’ll dip the meat into soy sauce. It’s a taste I carry with me.”

We speak while he is halfway around the world, on a rare sabbatical from the whirlwind of media appearances, cooking demos and restaurant commitments. He has taken this time, he said, to be with his parents and reconnect with the simpler joys of life.

But even far away from the stove, food remains at the centre of his thoughts.

### An unrivalled diversity

Malaysian food, for Sherson, is not a fixed archive to be preserved behind glass. It is alive – evolving, shaped by memory, migration and shared experience. To define





Preserving local ingredients such as *belacan*, *budu* and *bunga kantan*.

I'll make a big batch – enough for *laksa*, *rendang*, *rempah udang*, *masak lemak nenas* and stir-fry dishes. That one effort carries flavour through the month."

There is no need for bells and whistles – just thoughtful timing, smart use of ingredients and a little planning.

In a world where food content is often about speed and spectacle, Sherson offers something more grounded. His cooking, like his storytelling, is about connection. It invites people in and sometimes, that connection becomes the most powerful part of the recipe.

#### Each dish carries a story

Not all ingredients, however, share the spotlight equally. While durian has famously captured global attention – both admiration and horror in equal measure – many other local treasures still wait quietly in the wings.

For this, Sherson names *ulam*, *budu*, *daun kesum* and *belacan* as ingredients that deserve more love. Their complexity may not always be understood, but they are pillars of Malaysian cooking.

"Everyone talks about durian," he laughed.

"It's the first thing foreigners ask about. Meanwhile, other ingredients get overshadowed. But they're just as important, if not more, in defining our culinary character."

He sees potential not necessarily in exporting these flavours to the West, but in deepening appreciation within Asia.

"Fermented flavours are understood across Southeast Asia. Our neighbours like Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam – they get it. I once brought *belacan* to Dubai for a *laksa* demo. The audience loved it. The flavour isn't the problem. Sometimes it just needs the right context."

Sometimes, it needs the right storytelling. For Sherson, every dish has a story and storytelling is as essential as salt.

"It helps people understand the 'why'. Whether you're running a restaurant or sharing recipes online, storytelling gives your food meaning. It turns a plate into a journey."

#### Forgotten heritage

Between today's modern cooking and quick recipes, Sherson is determined to protect the legacy of *kuih-muih* – Malaysia's delicate, colourful desserts, which he fears are in danger of being forgotten.

"We're in a time when food trends from abroad take over our local scene. And there's nothing wrong with a good

croissant. But we'll pay RM15 for one while ignoring a *kuih* that costs RM3 and takes twice the effort," he said.

His concern is not just about economics or nostalgia, but about value. *Kuih*, to him, represents craftsmanship, heritage and soul.

"If we don't make space for them, they'll disappear. *Kuih pelita*, *angku kuih*, *kuih lapis* – they won't be around in the next generation unless we choose to keep them."

When asked if there is an ingredient that unlocks his creativity, his answer is instant. "*Bunga kantan*," he said.

"I absolutely love it. It's floral, vibrant. It makes everything taste better. Whether in *laksa*, rice or salads, it elevates everything it touches."

That enthusiasm is a reminder of why people have followed his journey for so long – there is nothing performative about his passion. It is lived in and sincere.

#### A philosophy of home

Every excellent cuisine has a philosophy. The Japanese have restraint and imperfection; the French have structure and elegance. So, what does Malaysia have?

"Balance," Sherson said. "Real, beautiful balance. We are a true melting pot. You can find Chinese, Malay and Indian food anywhere, anytime and it's all affordable. That kind of culinary equality is rare."

Now abroad, he finds himself thinking of the small luxuries of home.

"Broccoli is over RM50 where I am. Napa cabbage is over RM100. Even flour is the price of a can of beer. You start to realise how blessed we are. Our produce, our street food, our accessibility – it's priceless."

"Malaysia really is a food haven. There's nowhere else like it."

Because at its heart, Malaysian cuisine is not defined by one technique or tradition, but by its openness to evolve – a celebration of contrasts: Bold and subtle, rustic and refined, familiar and surprising.

A true reflection of the people who shape it every day, with every dish that tells a story.

That is the beauty of Malaysian flavours – not just in how they taste, but in how they live.

Who's to say which version of *sambal* is correct? Our cuisine was born out of a social movement."



The chef describes Malaysian cuisine as a celebration of balance – rustic yet refined.



# How stress can sneak into your immune system

BY CECELIA FONG

*Chronic stress does not just weigh on your mind – it can quietly lower your body's defences too. Here is how to spot the signs and stay resilient*

**Y**OU might expect stress to leave you tired or distracted. But have you noticed it also seems to open the door to a cough that refuses to go away, a rash that appears overnight, or a cold that drags on far longer than it should?

Chronic stress does not just live in your head. Over time, it chips away at your immune system, making it harder for your body to fend off everyday threats. In Malaysia's high-pressure, always-online culture, where rest often takes a backseat to responsibilities, this silent wearing-down process often goes unnoticed – until it shows up as a stubborn illness.

Short bursts of stress are not necessarily bad. A little stress can sharpen focus and even boost immune defences. It is the chronic, low-level stress – the kind that hums along as you juggle deadlines, obligations and traffic jams – that creates trouble.

When the body stays in “fight or flight” mode too long, it releases stress hormones like cortisol constantly. In small doses, cortisol is helpful. But when levels stay elevated over time, cortisol can suppress key immune functions. It reduces the production of white blood cells that fight infections, slows wound healing and interferes with the body's ability to detect and destroy unhealthy cells. Simply put, a stressed body is too distracted to fight properly.

## How to recognise the signs

You cannot feel your immune system the way you can feel a headache, but there are quiet hints it might be under strain.

You might find yourself getting sick more often, picking up colds, flus or minor infections with unusual ease. Recovery times can stretch too, a simple sniffle lingering for a week instead of disappearing in three days. Wounds and bruises may take longer to heal.

Existing conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, digestive issues or allergies may flare up during high-stress periods. Some people also experience unusual fatigue, feeling constantly run-down, no matter how much they sleep.

We easily dismiss these symptoms as random bad luck. Yet often, the body is waving a flag for attention.

It is important to be cautious, though. Not every cough or headache is caused by stress. Immune weakness can also stem from medical conditions, poor nutrition, certain medications or lifestyle factors. Persistent or unusual symptoms always deserve a proper medical evaluation.

## Building resilience quietly

Managing stress is not about eliminating it – that is impossible for most people. Instead, it is about giving the body regular opportunities to reset and recover. Small daily habits matter more than dramatic changes. Consistent, good-quality sleep

helps rebuild immune strength. Movement, even gentle walks or stretching sessions, keeps the lymphatic system active and circulation strong.

Nutrition plays its part too. Eating more fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains and staying well hydrated provide the raw materials needed to support defences.

Equally important is carving out small moments of rest and joy. Whether it is a

## Everyday habits that quietly boost immunity

You don't need to overhaul your life to support your immune system – often, the smallest habits make the biggest difference over time. Here are simple shifts that can help your body stay resilient without stress or supplements:

- **Start with hydration:** Even mild dehydration puts your system under unnecessary strain. Water supports circulation, digestion, temperature regulation and every cell in your immune network.
- **Breathing matters too:** Taking five-minute breaks for deep, slow breathing activates your parasympathetic nervous system – the body's natural “reset” button and helps lower inflammation.
- **Laughter isn't just a mood-lifter:** It's a quiet immunity booster. Research shows it reduces stress hormones, such as cortisol and increases infection-fighting antibodies. Watch something silly. Talk to someone who makes you laugh.
- **Get natural light in the morning:** It helps regulate your circadian rhythm, which influences everything from sleep quality to immune signalling.
- **Rest isn't a luxury:** It's a biological requirement. Deep, regular sleep strengthens your ability to fight infection and recover from stress.

quick walk or hiking, a cup of tea without a phone in sight or a few minutes of deep breathing, these pauses act like little tune-ups for the immune system.

Boundaries matter as well. Saying no, kindly but firmly, to non-essential demands can reduce the daily load on your nervous system, leaving more energy for health and healing.

It is not about perfection. It is about giving your body permission to step out of alert mode so it can quietly do what it was designed to do: protect you.



Laughter, movement and rest are simple ways to support immune health.



# Bold, boxy & fast

New Santa Fe stands out as a unique option in crowded SUV market

BY TIMOTHY PRAKASH



Boxy rear design.



1,949 liters when the second and third rows are folded flat.

**THE** Hyundai Santa Fe stands as one of Hyundai's most iconic models and a cornerstone of the brand's SUV legacy.

First introduced globally in the year 2000, it marked Hyundai's official entry into the SUV segment, a bold move that set the stage for the company's transformation into a serious global automotive contender.

Over five generations, the Santa Fe has evolved from a modest family utility vehicle into a sophisticated, technology-laden SUV that competes confidently with premium rivals.

In Malaysia, the Santa Fe has enjoyed a long and steady presence, resonating with buyers who value comfort, reliability, and practicality.

It was first introduced locally in the early

2000s, and since then, each generation has brought significant advancements in safety, design, and powertrain options.

The third and fourth generations, in particular, elevated the Santa Fe's image from a rugged family SUV to a more refined and premium offering.

Malaysian buyers were drawn to its combination of powerful diesel engine, generous seven-seat capacity, and impressive safety credentials.

Hyundai Motor Company has taken a major step in its expansion strategy with the establishment of Hyundai Motor Malaysia (HMY) and has taken the latest iteration of the Santa Fe even further upmarket – incorporating bold, boxy styling inspired by modern adventure vehicles, a luxurious interior, and cutting-edge hybrid and plug-in hybrid powertrains that cater to the growing demand for efficiency and sustainability.



21-inch matte black multi-spoke alloys.

## COMMANDING PRESENCE

For those who are not aware of the existence of the current generation Santa Fe, you will definitely need to look twice and wonder what this abomination is.

The latest iteration of the brand's D/E-segment SUV makes a commanding entrance with a striking, boxy silhouette and a host of modern enhancements.

The redesigned exterior introduces a more upright and muscular profile. A wide stance, high-set bonnet and flared fenders lend it a rugged appeal, while sophisticated design elements such as the dark chrome-finished grille, a hidden rear wiper, and the signature H-shaped LED lighting, give it a futuristic edge.

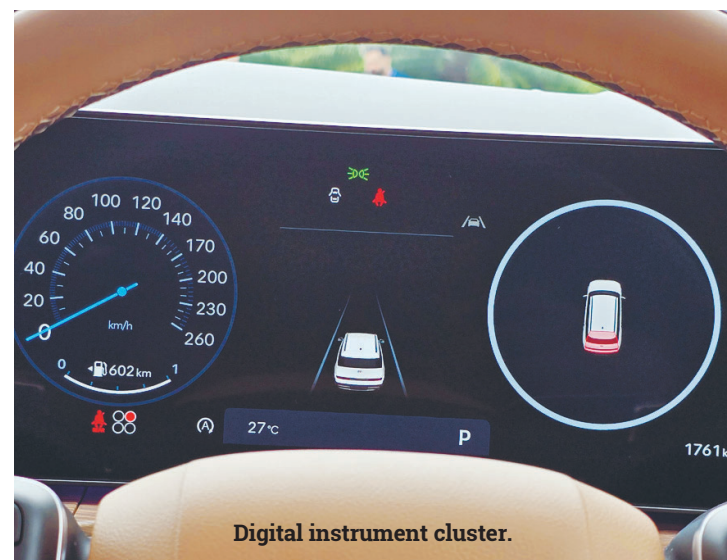
With the right body colour, this SUV will



Captain seats.



Two tone leather steering wheel.



Digital instrument cluster.

look menacing in your rearview mirror at night.

### HYBRID OR PETROL?

Hyundai has tailored the Santa Fe's powertrain offerings to appeal to a wide spectrum of drivers, launching three distinct variants in the local market.

The Prime and Prestige trims feature hybrid powertrains built around a 1.6-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine.

Mated to a six-speed automatic transmission and driving the front wheels, these variants generate 235PS at 5,500rpm and 367Nm of torque between 1,000 and 4,000rpm.

This setup delivers a balanced blend of efficiency and performance, making it ideal for daily commutes and long-distance travel.

At the top of the range is the Calligraphy variant, which takes performance up a notch with a 2.5-litre turbocharged engine.

Producing 281PS at 5,800rpm and 422Nm of torque from 1,700 to 4,000rpm, it offers a more dynamic driving experience.

This variant comes equipped with an 8-speed dual-clutch transmission and features all-wheel drive as standard.

### WHICH IS BETTER?

Well, at the end of the day, it all comes down to personal preference.

The hybrid variants have a calm and collective feel while driving. The power delivery feels seamless and smooth, with less engine noise spilling into the cabin.

However, while driving, we did notice that you will not feel the speed that you are actually driving.

For example, on the highway, we thought we were at a steady 80-95km/h; however, when we looked at the speedometer, we were at a whopping 130kph!

This can be dangerous in the wrong hands, as hitting the brakes and bringing the car to a stop at that speed will take time. If you are unable to estimate the stopping distance and the amount of time needed to hit the brakes, you are bound to crash, unless you somehow manage to do some hard braking and manoeuvring. But then again, this is just a user error.

Step into the Calligraphy variant, and you will not notice the difference in the front until you put your foot down on the throttle.

I found this powertrain to be much more suitable for the SUV because it felt at home. I could feel the power when pushing it. The engine sounds roaring through the cabin when flooring it enhanced the whole experience.



Physical temperature knobs.



Gear selector.



12.3-inch infotainment display.



Dual smartphone holders.

This is a whole new world compared to the hybrid variant. Yes, unlike the hybrid variant, there is a little bit more turbo lag when flooring this 2.5-litre from a standstill. However, it feels natural, and I have no complaints about that.

This powertrain will feed your ego while driving. It gives you a more commanding feel and asserts dominance over other cars on the road. During our drive and stay in Desaru, we noticed that there was a blacked-out version of the Calligraphy that belongs to the Managing Director of Hyundai Motor Malaysia.

With this powertrain and that blacked-out look, people are bound to stay away from you on the road.

Though it is big and boxy, the stability during corners and high speeds impressed us.

The Calligraphy variant felt lighter and more agile during tight corners. There is no need for you to be testing this on public roads but if ever there is a situation where quick manoeuvres are needed, it will definitely do the job.

### SAFETY

For a big car, safety most definitely plays a crucial role, and the Santa Fe is not lacking. It comes equipped with a comprehensive suite of advanced driver assistance systems as standard.

These include autonomous emergency braking with front cross-traffic alert, adaptive cruise control with stop-and-go capability, lane centring assist, and blind-spot

monitoring with active collision avoidance.

It also features front and rear cross-traffic alert with automatic braking, a door opening warning, rear seat reminder, and automatic high beam.

Stepping up to the Prestige variant enhances safety further with second-generation AEB that detects oncoming vehicles and provides evasive steering assistance, reverse AEB, dual blind-spot view cameras, and a convenient remote parking feature that can be activated via the Hyundai "H" logo key.

The airbag count has also been increased to 10, now including a driver's knee airbag, centre airbag, and rear side airbags, while stability control remains a standard feature across the range.

### SPACIOUS ENOUGH FOR GIANTS

There are some cars out there that look big from the outside, but step inside and you might feel a little claustrophobic. The Santa Fe, however, is spacious enough for giants to travel.

The expanded body dimensions translate to noticeably greater interior space, especially in the second and third rows.

Both legroom and headroom have been improved to better meet customer expectations for comfort.

The third-row seats now recline an additional 10°, offering what Hyundai describes as best-in-class spaciousness, while entry remains effortless thanks to a convenient one-touch tilt-and-slide mechanism for the second-row seats.

So it is safe to say that comfort during long-distance travelling will not be an issue.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Although priced at RM270,000, it is worth buying. I do not mind paying a little bit more for comfort and quality, which most SUVs lack nowadays. People would rather choose cheap options and compromise on quality, and then complain about how bad it is.

The Santa Fe offers comfort, quality, luxury and does not compromise on safety and performance.

### SPECIFICATIONS

#### Calligraphy

**Engine:** 2.5 litre T-GDi

**Power:** 281PS

**Torque:** 422Nm

**Transmission:** 8-speed dual-clutch

#### HEV Prestige

**Engine:** 1.6 litre turbocharged

**Power:** 235PS

**Torque:** 367Nm

**Transmission:** 6-speed automatic transmission

**Price (as tested):**

**RM270,000 (2.5 T-GDi HTRAC**

**Calligraphy)**

**RM245,000 (HEV Prestige)**

**We like:** Performance, looks, comfort and quality

**We don't like:** Not parked in our garage

**FIRST** things first, let me just make it clear that I understand the need to be profitable.

Money makes the world go round and if you are an organisation that provides a service or in this case, service and an infrastructure, then there are only a few other things more important than being profitable.

Being profitable becomes especially important when you have ministers releasing statements about the need for you to be self-sustainable otherwise, they may consider pulling the plug on your flagship event and probably on your entire organisation itself, though it was never explicitly put that way.

But being profitable should never make you seem greedy. This year's Malaysian MotoGP was a resounding success, once again.

A record 190,997 spectators attended the race, and in the 15 years or so that I have been attending the race, I am seeing an increase in the number of foreign attendees.

That is great for the country, for tourism operators, for everybody. It means MotoGP is putting Malaysia on the map and credit is due to the management of Sepang International Circuit for pulling off yet another suc-

## MotoGP was great, but could have been better

cessful event. That too despite the lockdowns that came with our government hosting the Asean Summit.

But I have a few bones to pick. The first being the cost of parking – RM31.80 for two-day parking for motorcycles? Come on.

You should never force people to pay that much for parking. As I said, I understand the need to make money, but don't tax the people who come from near and far to support you.

The thing that irks me the most is that the spectator guide on the official website of Sepang Circuit states that parking for bikes costs just RM10. But what it fails to mention is that the parking lot is so far away that it involves taking a shuttle to get to the entrance.

The same is true for cars as well. The spectator guide says RM20 but it involves a long walk, and everyone knows how hot or wet it can get in Sepang. Parking for cars at a more convenient location costs RM60 for two days.

What's more is that the spectator guide makes no mention that you must buy two-day parking. Did someone purposely



WRITTEN BY  
KESHY DHILLON

leave it out so as not to discourage spectators?

My question is this, why make people pay for two days of parking when they only want to park for a day? Or even for a few hours?

Then there is the issue of drinks. I was surprised to see x-ray and scanning machines as well as security at the entrance to the Welcome Centre. This is right at the entrance gate. This is usually at the entrance to the Main Grandstand area, which is fine.

As such, no bottled water was allowed into the premises. Money

making was obviously the priority here as well because it seems like there

was slots sold for drinks operators, and they were probably given an exclusive deal where spectators would not be allowed to bring their own drinks.

Again, I understand the need to be profitable, and the management reserves the right to give any vendor exclusivity, but having security set so far out is just super risky.

It is the monsoon season and there was a line forming at 9am on Saturday just to get into the Mall Area, which is past the Welcome Centre and right before the Main Grand Stand area. This is usually where all the vendors have their booths set up and sell their merchandise.

What if it had rained? What would the organisers have done then? This is ill thought out and a disaster was only averted because the weather held up.

Then there were the drinks "gardens". Where were the gardens? There was nothing but booths selling drinks but no garden areas to sit down. Spectators were sitting on the concrete floor around the mall area which was

either too hot or too wet.

The organisers could have been making money in different ways. MotoGP vendors make a ton of money every year and even if the organisers raised prices by RM2,000 to RM5,000 per booth, vendors would still have paid.

MotoGP is one of the biggest events in Malaysia and the organisers need to have more faith in it. The acreage around the mall area was not properly maximised either.

May I suggest working with a mall operator to better maximise the mall area?

Also, Petronas events agency needs to do a better job with the Welcome Centre.

Why was it so dull? I remember when Shell used to be the title sponsor and there were all kinds of activities at the area such as digital simulators, games for attendees, launches, displays, etc. Now it feels like someone forgot to do their homework with the area.

Besides all of this, MotoGP once again put on a stellar show for Malaysians. It's a pity that the Asean Summit coincided with the race and forced road closures but both events put us on the world map and there is no arguing against it.

## Premium versatility



Xpeng unveils Extended-Range X9 MPV with 1,602km distance capability



**XPENG** has introduced the extended-range version of its X9, a seven-seater mid-to-large MPV that combines long-distance capability with modern electric performance.

While maintaining the familiar form of the fully electric X9, the new version features minor design updates and adds a range-extending powertrain that significantly boosts total driving distance. The new model will officially launch in the fourth quarter of 2025.

At the core of the new X9 is Xpeng's Kunpeng super-extended-range system, which pairs a 1.5-litre turbocharged range extender (DAM15NTE) producing 148hp with a high-capacity 63.3kWh battery pack.

The vehicle operates on an 800V high-voltage platform and supports 5C ultra-fast charging.

Under CLTC testing, it offers 452km of pure electric range and an impressive combined range of 1,602km. Official figures list combined fuel consumption at 0.15L/100km, or 6.4L/100km under certain conditions, highlighting its efficiency.

The exterior design largely mirrors the electric X9, with a few refinements. It adopts a split headlight layout complemented by three-stage LED daytime running lights and a closed front grille flanked by vertical air intakes.

A new Aurora Blue exterior colour joins the range, while the front bumper incorporates an active dual-stage cooling system

for improved aerodynamics.

From the side, the X9 Extended Range maintains the futuristic, mecha-inspired silhouette of the standard model. Hidden A, B, C, and D pillars create a floating roof effect, while sculpted door panels and 20-inch spoked alloy wheels enhance its dynamic appearance.

At the rear, the X9 features a frameless rear window with a fastback profile, giving the MPV a sportier stance.

A full-width LED taillight strip with an illuminated Xpeng logo spans the tailgate, enhancing visibility and brand identity. The layered rear design with a two-tone lower bumper adds depth and visual balance.

Distinguishing it from the pure electric

variant, the extended-range model includes a fuel filler port on the left rear fender, while retaining fast and slow charging ports on the right.

Despite the addition of a 60-litre fuel tank, Xpeng has confirmed that the model continues to feature rear-wheel steering, ensuring high manoeuvrability for its size.

The SUV represents a blend of advanced EV engineering and long-distance practicality, offering a seamless transition between electric and petrol-assisted driving.

With its combination of striking design, cutting-edge technology, and extended travel capability, it positions itself as a versatile premium MPV for modern families and long-distance travellers alike.

BYD has unveiled the 2026 Qin L DM-i, its latest plug-in hybrid sedan that brings a series of updates to interior controls, digital connectivity, and fuel efficiency.

The new model delivers a pure-electric range of 128km and achieves a remarkable NEDC-rated fuel consumption of 2.79L/100 km, with a total driving range of 2,148km.

Two variants are available, priced between 92,800 yuan (around RM60,700) and 102,800 yuan (around RM67,200) during the launch period.

The 2026 Qin L DM-i continues to express BYD's "New National Trend Dragon Face" design philosophy.

The front fascia has been refined with a wide lower grille and sleek headlights connected by upward "dragon whisker" LED elements, adding visual width and a distinct character.

The overall design maintains the sedan's aerodynamic balance while giving it a more polished, modern appearance.

Inside, the cabin adopts a cleaner and more practical layout. The traditional gear lever has



been replaced with a column-mounted selector, freeing up space on the centre console.

The new DiLink100 infotainment system introduces an enhanced interface with features such as a pet-themed display

mode and an integrated karaoke system that functions without a microphone.

Navigation is now more intuitive – drivers can sync destinations from their smartphones using a long-press drag or even a

shake gesture.

Music subscriptions can also be shared seamlessly between the car's system and the user's mobile device, creating a connected digital environment.'

Under the bonnet, the power-

train remains unchanged but refined for better efficiency. The Qin L DM-i pairs a 1.5-litre petrol engine (74kW, 126Nm) with an electric motor offered in 160hp and 215hp versions.

The updated hybrid system achieves a 128km pure-electric range and an NEDC fuel consumption of 2.79 L/100km when operating as a hybrid.

BYD has also enabled OTA updates for current owners, allowing them to lower post-discharge fuel consumption to 2.6 L/100km on the 80km EV version.

The car also comes equipped with the BYD Tianshen C driver-assistance system, offering features such as adaptive cruise control, lane-keeping assistance, and active safety functions.

Positioned above the Qin Plus, the Qin L offers a longer wheelbase and increased cabin space, making it more suited for families or passengers seeking greater comfort.

The 2026 update not only enhances its feature set but also introduces revised pricing strategies to maintain strong competitiveness within the mid-size hybrid sedan market.

## Performance, precision and distinctive design

**PORSCHE** has expanded its all-electric Macan line-up with the introduction of the Macan GTS, a model that redefines agility and driving precision in the electric SUV segment.

With up to 571PS of overboost power, an electronically controlled rear

differential lock, and sports air suspension with a lowered ride height, the GTS stands as the most dynamic version of the Macan Electric to date.

The SUV accelerates from 0 to 100kph in 3.8 seconds, reaches 200kph in 13.3 seconds, and tops out at 250kph.

At the heart of the Macan GTS is the same high-output rear-axle electric motor found in the Macan Turbo, measuring 230mm in diameter with a 900-amp silicon carbide inverter for maximum efficiency.

Together with the front motor, it produces 516PS and peaks at 571PS with Launch Control, generating a formidable 955Nm of torque.

The 100kWh battery enables a WLTP range of up to 586km, while 270kW DC fast charging allows a 10–80% recharge in just 21 minutes.

The Macan GTS maintains rear-biased weight distribution (48:52) and benefits from Porsche's electronic all-wheel drive system (ePTM) and Torque Vectoring Plus (PTV Plus) for sharper handling.

A lower centre of gravity and specially tuned sports air suspension – lowered by 10mm compared to other variants – enhance stability and steering accuracy.

The exterior of the Macan GTS follows the traditional GTS styling language with dark-coloured accents and a stronger visual stance.

Its Matrix LED headlights are tinted, while new black trim elements frame the front, sides, and rear. The lower section incorporates an expressive diffuser panel, emphasising the car's width and road presence.

Inside, the Macan GTS continues its performance-oriented identity with extended race-tex upholstery, black smooth leather accents, and heated multifunction GT Sports steering wheel,



18-way adjustable sports seats feature race-tex centre panels and smooth leather bolsters, combining grip with long-distance comfort.

Like the rest of the Macan range, the GTS benefits from the latest digital and driver-assistance upgrades. These include Porsche Digital Key functionality, AI-powered Voice Pilot, advanced parking aids, in-car gaming, and an increased towing capacity of 2,500kg.

With its enhanced chassis, powerful drivetrain, and signature GTS styling, the Macan GTS represents Porsche's most engaging electric SUV yet.

It combines the brand's motorsport DNA with modern electric performance and everyday practicality – continuing the GTS legacy into a new era of electric mobility.

## Proton e.MAS expands to over 50 dealerships

**PROTON** New Energy Technology Sdn Bhd (PRO-NET), the distributor of Proton e.MAS, has announced the expansion of its national dealership network to more than 50 outlets, officially making Proton e.MAS the largest electric vehicle (EV) dealership network in Malaysia.

By the end of October 2025, 45 Proton e.MAS dealerships will be fully operational, each offering a complete EV ownership experience that includes vehicle sales, test drives, charging facilities, and aftersales support.

This milestone underlines Proton's ambition to build a comprehensive and inclusive EV ecosystem, ensuring that every Malaysian has access to electrified mobility across the country.

Proton e.MAS continues to strengthen its presence throughout Malaysia, ensuring greater accessibility for customers and supporting the increasing demand for electric vehicles.

By the end of October 2025, 45 outlets will be operational, with the total expected to reach 50 by December 2025.

The expansion includes key regions such as the Klang Valley – with dealerships in Bangsar, Pandan Indah, Bukit

Jalil, Batu Caves, Kota Damansara, Cyberjaya, and Kajang – as well as Johor (Skudai, Kluang, and Johor Bahru) and Penang (Nibong Tebal and Batu Kawan).

Pro-Net continues to welcome new partners to join its growing dealership network.

Businesses or individuals interested in being part of Proton e.MAS's journey towards a sustainable, electrified future are encouraged to reach out via email at [affendyk@proton.com](mailto:affendyk@proton.com).

The Proton e.MAS 5, Malaysia's first affordable electric vehicle, has already surpassed 4,000 bookings since the order books opened, reflecting strong public interest and confidence in the brand's approach to accessible EV ownership.

As bookings near the 5,000 mark, Proton e.MAS has issued a final call for customers to secure the exclusive Early Bird Package before it officially closes.

Customers can book their Proton e.MAS 5 through the official Proton e.MAS website or by visiting any Proton e.MAS dealership nationwide.

The booking fee is RM99, and early customers will receive a limited-edition Proton e.MAS Touch 'n Go NFC Card preloaded with RM100 and a RM500 rebate on the booking fee.

## Solve The Phrase And Sudoku

#1

□ □ □ Y  
S H □ R □

Hint: Pinkfong Company's popular hit

Letters Remaining = ABK

#2

□ □ S E P □ I □ E

Hint: A pineapple variety

Letters Remaining = OJHN

#3

□ G □ N D □

Hint: Pearl of Africa

Letters Remaining = AU

#4

□ □ □ O N □ □  
K □ □ N □ □  
□ □ S □ □ S □

Hint: Non-communicable disease

Letters Remaining = HRCDEYAI

#5

□ □ □ K  
□ E □ □ □ □  
M □ □ □ Y □ □ □

Hint: Malaysia's central bank

Letters Remaining = SALINRBG

#6

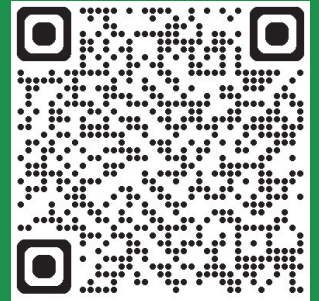
T □ □ O □  
□ □ S T □

Hint: Asean's latest member

Letters Remaining = ERILM

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



**GIANTS VS TITANS**  
Gamification for  
a better planet  
from FIRST RAY

Answers  
will be uploaded  
on Sunday,  
November 9 @  
[thesun.my/puzzles](https://thesun.my/puzzles)

# Your weekend horoscope



**ARIES**  
**March 21 – April 19**  
 Your strong will makes it easy to take action when others hesitate. You may feel motivated to step up and solve problems quickly, and people around you appreciate your courage. Communication works best when you stay calm and listen before reacting. A burst of creative energy may push you to try new ideas.



**TAURUS**  
**April 20 – May 20**  
 Your grounded nature helps you stay calm even if there are changes around you. Practical tasks may require attention, but steady effort keeps everything under control. Taking care of personal needs brings comfort and strength. A focus on resources or stability may guide your choices, and clear planning eases worries.



**GEMINI**  
**May 21 – June 20**  
 Your curious mind keeps you active, and interesting conversations may lead to fresh ideas. It is easier to express your thoughts clearly, and this helps avoid confusion. Focusing on a few important goals rather than many smaller ones brings better results. People may enjoy your sense of humour and the lively way you communicate.



**CANCER**  
 Your caring and protective nature becomes a comfort to others. You may feel more sensitive to the emotions around you, so taking time for quiet reflection helps you stay balanced. Close relationships grow stronger when you show gentleness and share your feelings honestly.



**LEO**  
**July 23 – Aug 22**  
 Your lively spirit attracts attention and lifts the energy of those around you. Creativity feels natural, and expressing yourself boldly brings joy. Leadership may come easily, but giving others space to shine keeps relationships strong.



**VRIGO**  
**Aug 23 – Sept 22**  
 Your practical thinking helps you stay organised and calm while handling responsibilities. Progress comes in small steps, and patience allows things to unfold smoothly. Clear routines support your well-being and keep your mind sharp. Avoid focusing too much on flaws.



In classical *feng shui*, we observe not just the physical proximity of buildings, but also their function and intensity of energy.

## Hidden *feng shui* disruptions

Living beside temple, school may not be good

**LIVING** next to a temple, school or police station might seem like a blessing as these institutions are often associated with stability, discipline and community respect.

But in *feng shui*, their energetic influence tells a different story – especially when they are directly beside your home. In classical *feng shui*, we observe not just the physical proximity of buildings, but also their function and intensity of energy.

Temples, schools and police stations have strong *yang* energy – active, authoritative and often loud. This constant motion and intensity can be overwhelming for a residential home meant to offer rest, nourishment and emotional safety.

### Excessive yang can disrupt household energy

Temples generate energy from prayers, rituals, bells and a continual flow of people. Over time, this creates spiritual interference – not always negative, but overwhelming if too close.

Schools carry bursts of high activity, noise, and movement during early mornings and afternoons. This sudden *yang* surge clashes with the natural rhythm of your home.

Police stations or fire departments may bring unexpected sirens, high alert frequencies and a sense of tension – affecting rest and emotional calmness, especially for children or the elderly.

### Energetic imbalance

When a home is exposed to intense *yang* energy without balance, you may notice:

- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Tension among household members
- Feeling mentally restless or “on edge”
- Delays in wealth accumulation or poor decision-making

### Remedies

Use tall plants or water features to soften direct energy hitting your home. Install thicker curtains or noise-reducing materials on affected walls/windows. Create an internal buffer zone (such as a reading nook or wall divider) between the affected side and your main activity areas.

Remember, it is not about fearing these institutions but managing the intensity and direction of their energy flow in relation to your personal space. Always observe your surroundings before signing that property deal. What looks peaceful at first can carry hidden energetic currents.

*This article is contributed by metaphysics researcher Daniel Siew. Discover more [www.danielsiew.com](http://www.danielsiew.com)*



**LIBRA**  
**Sept 23 – Oct 22**  
 Your natural charm makes it easier to maintain peace. Cooperation feels comfortable, and your fairness helps bring people closer together. You may feel drawn to beauty or calming surroundings that refresh your spirit. Relationships flourish when you balance giving with receiving.



**SCORPIO**  
**Oct 23 – Nov 21**  
 Your deep focus and strong emotions give you the power to make meaningful progress. Reflection brings important clarity. Honest communication builds trust, especially with people you care about. When emotions rise, taking a moment to breathe keeps everything balanced. Your loyalty becomes even stronger when you feel supported in return.



**SAGITTARIUS**  
**Nov 22 – Dec 21**  
 Your adventurous outlook pushes you towards new ideas and fresh experiences. You may feel inspired to explore or learn something that excites your imagination. Social interactions bring energy, and your positive attitude encourages others to join in. Just be mindful of promising more than you can manage.



**CAPRICORN**  
**Dec 22 – Jan 19**  
 Your responsible nature keeps things running smoothly, even when demands rise. Long-term goals may feel clearer, making it easier to stay motivated. People trust your reliability, and your calm problem-solving skills bring respect. You need to use those skills to benefit you.



**AQUARIUS**  
**Jan 20 – Feb 18**  
 Your forward-thinking ideas help you spot unique opportunities and positive changes. Friendships and teamwork feel supportive, and shared goals may bring excitement. Personal space is important too, giving you time to reflect and stay balanced.



**PISCES**  
**Feb 19 – March 20**  
 Your gentle and intuitive nature helps you connect emotionally with others, offering comfort when it is needed. Creativity can help you express what words cannot. Protecting your energy keeps you from feeling drained, especially if many people rely on you. Simple moments of peace bring clarity.



## Bowlers set up Pakistan win

**PACE BOWLERS** Faheem Ashraf and Salman Mirza registered their best international T20 figures to guide Pakistan to a nine-wicket win over South Africa in Lahore yesterday.

Faheem grabbed 4-23 and Salman snared 3-14 to dismiss South Africa for just 110 before opener Saim Ayub struck an unbeaten 71, helping Pakistan easily knock off the runs.

The win levelled the series at 1-1 after South Africa won the first match in Rawalpindi by 55 runs on Tuesday. The third and final match is in Lahore overnight.

Saim's 38-ball burst featured six fours and five sixes, the last coming off Donovan Ferreira to seal the victory, with Babar Azam also not out on 11.

Pakistan raced to 54 in the seventh over with Sahibzada Farhan smashing three sixes as he made 28 before he was trapped leg-before by Corbin Bosch.

Babar became the highest run-scorer in T20 internationals, surpassing India batsman Rohit Sharma's total of 4,231 in 159 games. He now has 4,234 in 130 matches.

Pakistan captain Salman Agha hopes his team can replicate their display in the series decider.

"I am happy with this win," said Salman. "They outplayed us in the last game but today we bowled well up front and now I hope this good work continues in the next match."

South African skipper Ferreira

admitted the batting let his team down.

"We didn't give our bowlers enough to defend," said Ferreira. "We don't have much time to reflect on this so we need to put this behind and come strong tomorrow."

South Africa, sent in to bat, were jolted two balls into their innings when Salman bowled Reeza Hendricks for nought.

Naseem Shah had Quinton de Kock caught for seven before Salman dismissed Tony de Zorzi (seven) and Matthew Breetzke (five) in successive overs.

From 23-4, Dewald Brevis and Ferreira added the highest stand of the innings of 26 before Faheem stopped any revival with a haul of four wickets. - AFP

## Hazlewood stars for Australia

Host ease past India to win 2nd T20

**MITCHELL MARSH** slammed a brisk 46 after Josh Hazlewood took 3-13 as Australia cruised past India by four wickets to win the second Twenty20 international on Friday.

Sent in at a packed Melbourne Cricket Ground, India slumped to 125 all out off 18.4 overs with an electric spell by Hazlewood doing the early damage.

Only Abhishek Sharma (68) and Harshit Rana (35) made it into double figures.

Marsh led the reply with 46 off 26 deliveries, putting on 51 with Travis Head (28 off 15) for the opening wicket, with the hosts winning with 40 balls remaining.

"It was a good toss to win, bit of moisture and Josh is a great bowler when there's something in it," said skipper Marsh. "We wanted to take a couple of wickets early."

"I was a bit nervous but got going in the end," he added of his batting. "Head took the pressure off. Should be a good three games to come."

Along with Hazlewood, Xavier Bartlett and Nathan Ellis chipped in with two wickets each.

The win gave Australia a 1-0 lead in the five-match series after the opening game in Canberra was a washout. The

third game is in Hobart today.

"The way he (Hazlewood) bowled in the powerplay, if you're four down in the powerplay it's difficult to recover from that," said India captain Suryakumar Yadav, whose side slumped to 40-4 after the six-over powerplay.

"Abhishek has been doing this for quite some time now," he added of the Indian opener.

"He knows his game and his identity and he is not changing it anymore and hopefully he sticks to it and plays many more knocks like this for us."

"I think we need to do what we did in the first game," Yadav said of the next clash in Hobart. "Bat well when batting first and then come out and defend."

A minute's silence was held ahead of the game to mourn 17-year-old Australian Ben Austin who died after being hit by a ball in the nets before a local game in Melbourne on Thursday. - AFP



Australia's Josh Hazlewood reacts after dismissing India's Suryakumar Yadav. - AFP/ICC

## Afghanistan seal Zimbabwe T20 series

**SPINNER** Rashid Khan and batter Ibrahim Zadran starred as Afghanistan beat Zimbabwe by seven wickets yesterday to clinch a three-match Twenty20 series with a game to spare.

Zimbabwe won the toss, batted and were all out for 125 at Harare Sports Club. Afghanistan then reached 129-3 with 12 balls remaining.

After suffering a heavy loss in a one-off Test, the tourists had won the first T20 by 53 runs on Wednesday. The dead rubber T20 will be played today.

Rashid took 3-9, including the wicket of rival captain Sikandar

Raza, who top-scored for Zimbabwe with 37 off 32 balls, including four fours.

Raza was caught and bowled as he struggled to deal with a delivery aimed at off stump, striking the ball straight to the 27-year-old Afghan skipper.

Rashid struck again three balls later in the 16th over, as his googly led to Tashinga Musekiwa (13) being caught by Mohammad Nabi at long on.

The 24-run sixth-wicket partnership of Raza and Musekiwa was the best for Zimbabwe, who struggled after the failures of top-order pair

Dion Myers (six) and Brendan Taylor (three).

Brad Evans (12) was Rashid's other victim, trapped leg before as he attempted a sweep with Zimbabwe desperately seeking runs late in the innings.

For the second straight T20, Ibrahim top scored for Afghanistan, hitting an unbeaten 57 for his 12th T20 half century after 52 runs on Wednesday. His 51-ball stand included seven fours.

It was left to fourth-wicket partner Azmatullah Omarzai to hit the match and series-winning four past long off. - AFP

302 Jobs



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# Gunning for No. 1

Sinner boosts bid for top spot, faces Zverev in Paris semis

JANNIK SINNER took a step closer to reclaiming the world No. 1 ranking with a comfortable victory over Ben Shelton in the Paris Masters quarterfinals on Friday, setting up a clash with reigning champion Alexander Zverev.

The Italian powered to a 6-3, 6-3 win over his fifth-seeded opponent and will next face Zverev, who saved two match points to beat Daniil Medvedev 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-5), in yesterday's semifinals.

Sinner, looking to take advantage of rival Carlos Alcaraz's shock second-round loss to Cameron Norrie, extended his winning streak to 24 successive matches on indoor hard courts.

Sinner will usurp Alcaraz at the top of the rankings by winning the title at the La Defense Arena.

"At the moment I'm not thinking about the ranking," he said. "It all depends on how I'm playing. We go day by day, every day you have very difficult challenges coming up."

He has now won seven successive matches against the powerful Shelton since losing their first meeting in Shanghai in 2023.

The 24-year-old is targeting his fifth title of the season after last weekend adding the Vienna Open trophy to his Australian Open,

Wimbledon and China Open triumphs from earlier in the year.

Sinner has won his last three meetings with Zverev.

"I'm happy to be in the situation where I am, tomorrow it's again a very important day but I'm looking forward to it," Sinner added.

Third seed Zverev kept his title defence on track after digging deep in a tense clash with former world No. 1 Medvedev.

Medvedev raced through the first set before losing his rhythm in the second as Zverev forced a decider.

The Russian moved to the brink of victory when leading 5-4 in the third as Zverev made a series of unforced errors on his forehand, but Medvedev passed up two opportunities to secure the win.

Zverev took that momentum into the tie-break and ended a run of five successive defeats by Medvedev when his opponent fired long.

Earlier, Alexander Bublik battled back to defeat Alex de Minaur and reach the first Masters 1000 semifinal of his career.

The Kazakh, enjoying his best-ever year, edged a dramatic contest 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 7-5 to set up a

last-four meeting with Felix Auger-Aliassime, who saw off Valentin Vacherot in his quarterfinal.

Bublik is still in the race to qualify for next month's ATP Finals in Turin, competing for the eighth and last berth with Lorenzo Musetti and Auger-Aliassime, albeit is more likely to have a chance as an alternate.

"That's definitely an important match but not probably the most important of my life. You never know. We'll see," Bublik said of his clash with Auger-Aliassime.

Auger-Aliassime cruised past surprise Shanghai Masters champion Vacherot 6-2, 6-2 to keep his hopes of qualifying for the Finals alive.

The Canadian, targeting his second Masters 1000 final appearance, holds a 3-2 winning head-to-head record over Bublik.

"He (Vacherot) is so confident and you are kind of scared to be honest," Auger-Aliassime said.

"I had to be so focused from the start and this level of intensity from the first game I brought helped ease me into the match and I played some good tennis." - AFP



JANNIK SINNER

## Sabalenka eyes Riyadh prize

BY JAMIE BRAIDWOOD

THE WTA Finals prides itself as the "crown jewel" of its season and a stacked edition of the eight-player year-end tournament offers no shortage of star quality.

Aryna Sabalenka is already guaranteed to finish the season at No. 1 in the world, and a dominant one at that after winning the US Open.

But a year that saw three other grand slam champions ensures she will face intense competition in her bid to win the Finals for the first time, and take home the biggest prize money of the season at a maximum of US\$5,235,000 (RM22m) - US\$235,000 (RM1m) more than her cheque for winning the US Open.

Sabalenka has been drawn into a group with French Open champion Coco Gauff, Jessica Pegula and Jasmine Paolini.

Wimbledon champion Iga Swiatek is the second seed and will play Amanda Anisimova, Elena Rybakina and Australian Open champion Madison Keys in the other round-robin, with the top two players from each group advancing to the semifinals.

As well as the four different grand slam champions, the competition for the final four places in the Finals went down to the wire.

With a late surge from Rybakina, Paolini qualified with a minuscule six more points than Mirra Andreeva, a two-time WTA 1000 champion this season at Indian Wells



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka in action during the WTA Finals at the King Saud University Indoor Arena in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Nov 8, 2024. - REUTERS FILEPIC

and Dubai. Sabalenka's victory at the US Open turned a consistent but frustrating season at the grand slams into a statement from the World No. 1, and a first WTA Finals title would emphasise that.

She will face a rematch of the French Open final when she plays Gauff, who is the reigning WTA Finals champion, and the first time they have met since burying the hatchet over the ungracious manner of Sabalenka's post-final comments at Roland Garros.

Pegula pushed Sabalenka close at the US Open semifinals, with the American then beating her in Wuhan.

Paolini reached two grand slam finals in 2024 but her follow-up year has been impressive too, winning her home Italian Open and leading Italy to the Billie Jean King Cup. The 29-year-old loves to defy expectations.

In some ways, the player of the season on the WTA Tour is Anisimova, who is the only player to be making her debut at the Finals.

She began the season unseeded at the Australian Open but her big-hitting game then caught fire.

The American's victory over Swiatek in the US Open quarterfinals, just a few weeks over losing 6-0, 6-0 to the same player in the Wimbledon final, was one of the performances and stories of the season.

Despite two defeats in grand slam finals this season, the 24-year-old has also won WTA 1000 titles, including in Beijing during the Asian swing.

If Anisimova comes out swinging, she can be a contender - although one of the curiosities of the week is that she will be playing Rybakina and Keys for the first time in her career. - The Independent

**JACQUES VILLENEUVE** offered a blunt assessment of Oscar Piastri's collapsing Formula 1 title challenge as he claimed team-mate Lando Norris "has been criticised for a lot less" this season.

The Brit now leads the championship for the first time since April thanks to his dominant victory at the Mexico City Grand Prix.

Norris had lost ground to his McLaren teammate earlier in the campaign, mostly because of a few erratic qualifying results which left himself with too much work to do in the race. But in recent round it has been Piastri who has begun to wobble.

Piastri has not beaten either Norris or third-placed Max Verstappen in a Grand Prix since winning the Dutch Grand Prix at the end of August. And, as a result of his slide, he has now slipped one point behind his teammate who is the one with all the momentum with four rounds

# Double standards

*Piastri getting short end of the stick, says Villeneuve*

remaining.

Assessing the situation, Jacques Villeneuve pointed out what he believes to be double standards in terms of how the two McLaren drivers have been treated by pundits and fans this year.

The 1997 champion said: "If you look at the first half of the season, he was very good at berating himself always, even too much. People really clamped on that, and they were starting to criticise him a lot.

"He's really come back now and he doesn't berate himself anymore. He's still very politically correct in all his

answers because he's not giving us anything, but when you look at the way Piastri has crumbled, he's not getting criticised the same way Norris has been criticised for a lot less. We'll see how that pans out in the long run."

Prior to the Mexico race, it was Verstappen who was on a winning run and the Red Bull star was piling on the pressure. But Norris dominated the race weekend at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez and McLaren team principal Andrea Stella said the track suited perfectly his driver's style of racing.

He said: "These special low-grip condi-

tions, they fit perfectly. It's a natural way of extracting lap time, which is almost opposite to Oscar's characteristics.

"It will just strengthen Lando's confidence and it will be important for the final four races. But I think both Lando and Oscar go into the final four races with reasons to be confident.

"I think the team also goes into the final four races with more understanding of how to extract performance from the car consistently, because over the last few races before Mexico, we have left some performance in the garage." – Express Newspapers

## Wrexham end Coventry's unbeaten run

**KIEFFER MOORE** scored a perfect second-half hatrick as Wrexham came from behind to beat Coventry 3-2 yesterday to hand the English Championship leaders their first league loss of the season.

Defeat for Coventry, managed by former England midfielder Frank Lampard, ended the Sky Blues' run of six straight league wins and left them just three points clear of second-placed Middlesbrough.

Victory took Wrexham, owned by the Hollywood duo of Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney, into the top half of the table.

Wrexham had their chances in the first half before Ephron Mason-Clark opened the scoring for Coventry.

But even at 1-0 up at halftime, Lampard said he "smelt" danger.

"We have had a challenging week because we lost three of the back four," he told *Sky Sports*.

"But that's not pointing at the players who came into those areas, that's looking at us as a whole and saying we were not quite at it today."

Lampard added: "I smelt it at halftime, even at 1-0 up. I could smell it. We just dropped a bit.

"Maybe that happens when you are 12 unbeaten and win six on the bounce. We can't believe our own hype. This league is long."

Wrexham boss have enjoyed three successive promotions under their famous owners, with manager Phil Parkinson saying: "That was a proper Wrexham performance, which our fans have been used to over the years."

Coventry, bidding for promotion to the Premier League, went ahead in the 22nd minute.

Mason-Clark swept home a first-time finish on the half-volley from Tatsuhiro Sakamoto's excellent cross out on the right after beating the offside trap. But Wrexham were level on the hour mark to the delight of the home crowd at the Racecourse Ground.

Issa Kabore fed Josh Windass down the right and his cross was turned home by the sliding Moore with a right-foot finish.

Nine minutes later, a throw down the right wing led to another assist from Windass with his ball nodded in by Moore.

The Wales striker then took his impressive goal tally this season for Wrexham to nine in 16 appearances seven minutes from time when, with Windass the provider again, Moore drilled a low, left-foot shot into the far corner of the net.

Coventry game themselves a lifeline in the 88th minute when Japan forward Sakamoto let fly with a superb left-foot shot that curled into the far corner.

But Wrexham, beaten by Welsh rivals Cardiff in the League Cup in midweek, saw the game out. – AFP



Augsburg's Anton Kade (right) challenges Dortmund's Serhou Guirassy for the ball. – AFP/IC

## Guirassy lifts Dortmund past Augsburg

**A FIRST HALF** Serhou Guirassy goal secured Borussia Dortmund a 1-0 win over Augsburg yesterday in a warm-up for next week's Champions League trip to Manchester City.

The victory took Dortmund to second in the Bundesliga, four points behind leaders Bayern Munich, who host Bayer Leverkusen overnight.

Dortmund were solid but far from spectacular against a struggling Augsburg, who had won one of their past eight.

In a match with few chances for either side, the visitors needed an Augsburg mistake to take the lead eight minutes before halftime.

Chrislain Matsima blasted a clearance into his teammate Han-Noah Massengo, with the ball falling perfectly to Guirassy.

The Guinean took a touch and blasted through the outstretched hand

of Augsburg goalkeeper Finn Dahmen. The goal was Guirassy's first in the league since mid-September.

"We played 120 minutes on Tuesday in Frankfurt. You could already tell in Frankfurt how every single player was already at their limit," Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel told *Sky Germany*.

"These types of games are super difficult," Kobel said of yesterday's match.

"A short turnaround, another away game, more flying, more travelling. I wouldn't say it was a top performance, but we kept a clean sheet at the back, we won the game."

The start of the match was delayed when Dortmund fans threw tennis balls onto the pitch, protesting the late starting time and calling for all Bundesliga matches to be moved to Saturday afternoon.

Having gone to extra-time in Tuesday's German Cup win at Eintracht Frankfurt that went to penalties, Dortmund coach Niko Kovac made six changes to his starting line-up.

The coach rested a handful of regulars and elected to leave defender and captain Nico Schlotterbeck, who had a light cold, at home.

The result continued Augsburg's woes under rookie coach Sandro Wagner, the former Bayern and Germany striker.

Augsburg, who were eliminated from the German Cup by second-division Bochum in midweek, have lost six of nine league games this season and sit just three points above the relegation zone.

Dortmund and City go into next week's meeting in the Champions League level on seven points after three rounds of matches. – AFP

THE Premier League has announced its fixture schedule for the festive period, with just one game scheduled for the traditional Boxing Day slot due to complications with a congested calendar caused by the "expansion of European club competitions."

Manchester United will host Newcastle United at 8pm on Friday Dec 26 (Sat, Dec 27 @ 4am Malaysian time), with a further nine fixtures to be played across Saturday (Dec 27) and Sunday (Dec 28).

However, this includes five matches scheduled at 3pm on Saturday (Dec 27 @ 11pm),

# Sign of the times

*EPL abandons Boxing Day tradition*



fewer than previous seasons, despite being a 380-match competition since 1995.

"With fewer weekends to work with, the League is bound by how the calendar falls. The League can give an assurance that next season there will be more Premier League matches on Boxing Day – as the date falls on a Saturday."

There will be a full programme of EFL and non-league fixtures on Boxing Day, however, with a further round of games in the lower divisions expected on Dec 29. – The Independent

which will not be televised in the UK due to the 3pm TV blackout.

There were eight Premier League games played on Boxing Day last season, with a full round of 10 top-flight fixtures played on Boxing Day the last time it fell on a Friday in 2014.

The Premier League has assured fans that there will be more fixtures on Boxing Day next year, as it falls on a Saturday in 2026.

There will then be six matches on Dec 30, and a further four on Jan 1 – all to be shown on either Sky Sports or TNT Sports – with no Premier League matches scheduled on New Year's Eve.

The Premier League must fulfil 33 weekends of fixtures as part of its arrangements with broadcasting partners and following an agreement with the FA over the exclusivity of certain FA Cup weekends.

The Premier League scheduled this season's midweek rounds for the start of December, January and March,

another in mid-February and the fifth from Dec 30.

With FA Cup replays scrapped, the FA Cup has been granted exclusive weekends for the fourth, fifth and quarterfinals rounds, while the expanded Champions League league phase now concludes across two midweeks in late January.

A statement from the Premier League said: "The Premier League would like to acknowledge the circumstances that have led to a reduced number of matches on Boxing Day this season – impacting an important tradition in English football.

"There are now several challenges to Premier League fixture scheduling rooted in the expansion of European club competitions – which led to a revision of our domestic calendar ahead of last season, including changes to the FA Cup.

"This ultimately left the Premier League as a 33-weekend competition –

## Arsenal reject Palace's League Cup reschedule request

ARSENAL have opposed Crystal Palace's request to reschedule their Carabao Cup quarterfinal to Dec 23, with manager Mikel Arteta saying it would be unfair for both teams to play twice in barely 48 hours.

The match is now set for Dec 16, part of a gruelling run of four games in eight days, with Palace facing Manchester City in the Premier League on Dec 14, KuPS in the Conference League on Dec 18, and returning to league action on Dec 21, away at Leeds.

Palace argued that both sides should have equal time to recover before the quarterfinal, as Arsenal host Wolverhampton Wanderers on Dec 13.

The south London club were open to a Christmas Eve game, but that option was ruled out after talks with the Metropolitan Police and Transport for London, who cited limited public transport services.

Arsenal, the home team, were also opposed to playing on Christmas Eve, while Palace later proposed Dec 23 as an alternative, two days before Arsenal's trip to Everton (Dec 21), kicking off at the

same time as Palace's game at Leeds.

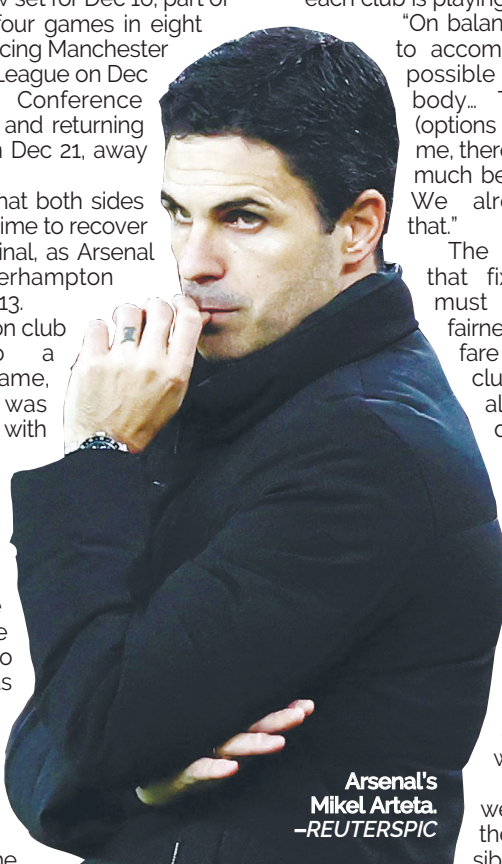
"I don't think that's fair, because we have other competitions as well we have to try to accommodate. We knew at the start of the season the competitions that each club is playing in," Arteta said.

"On balance we have to try to accommodate the best possible way for everybody... There are other options (options to Dec 23). Believe me, there are other options much better than this one. We already suggested that."

The Spaniard warned that fixture congestion must be handled with fairness and player welfare in mind, otherwise clubs might eventually consider withdrawing from competitions.

"I hope we don't go (that far)," he said. "If we have that big piece of paper with those two principles there in front before making any decision, all of us in our industry, we won't get there.

"If we don't and we just ignore that, then anything is possible." – Reuters



Arsenal's Mikel Arteta. –REUTERSPIC

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4193 2527	4204 2273

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Starters	Consolation
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Australia's Josh Ferris. - BERNAMAPIC

## Ferris, Derron beat heat to lift Ironman titles

**JOSH FERRIS** and Julie Derron not only beat the sweltering heat but also their opponents en route to winning the men's and women's professional categories at the Ironman 70.3 Langkawi, which ended at the Pelangi Beach Resort and Spa on Friday.

Australian Ferris, 24, made his Ironman 70.3 Langkawi debut look easy as he dominated the field to finish the race in three hours, 46 minutes and 56 seconds.

"Today is a hard day. The weather is so hot, so I needed to drink water to cool myself. The weather here is much more

humid... this is the hardest race, condition-wise, I have ever competed in.

"The most brutal discipline is the last 10km of the run at the airport. It's so lonely, but overall I'm happy with the race, and this year is a pretty (good) season for me. I'll be coming back next year," he told reporters.

The participants in the professional category had to swim 1.9km, cycle for 90km and run for 21.1km. In the men's category, Dane Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen, 27, came in second in 3:50:25 while Canadian Tyler Mislawchuk, 31, finished third in 3:55:30.

In the women's category, 29-year-

old Derron of Switzerland made sure her last-minute participation, which is also her debut appearance, ended in style as she captured the title in 4:13:52.

"I am happy to take the win here in Langkawi, even on short notice. So, I'm glad. I haven't raced for a while because I was recovering from a crash, so I was nervous, but I'm pleased to have had a good race.

"Everything went nicely and smoothly, even though the bike course required climbing hills towards the end, and the run around the airport was long and extremely

hot.

"Overall, the course was challenging, but I don't have any plans yet for next year's Ironman Langkawi," she said.

Australia's Natalie Van Coevorden, 32, finished second in 4:18:11 while France's Justine Guerard, 31, was third in 4:22:17.

Meanwhile, Shahrom Abdullah, 46, was the fastest Malaysian in the men's category, completing the grueling race in 4:42:31 while Chew Huey Ming, was the quickest Malaysian in the women's event, with a finishing time of 5:31:52. - Bernama

## Choi tightens grip

### High-flying Korean one step away from glory

**SOUTH KOREA'S** Choi Hye-Jin strengthened her hold at the top of the leaderboard with a six-birdie blitz for a 5-under 67 in the third round of the Maybank Championship 2025 at the Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club (KLGCC) yesterday.

Choi, whose only blemish yesterday was a lone bogey on the 16th hole, soared brilliantly with birdies on the third, fourth, 10th, 12th, 14th and 18th holes for a brilliant 19-under 197 three-day total - and a four-stroke lead heading into today's final round.

The South Korean, who has shown remarkable consistency to lead the way since the first round on Thursday, admitted to having to deal with her nerves as she seeks to seal the deal.

"Actually, I had a lot of chances to win previously, but I didn't take them. But now that I have played well in the last three days, I'm just looking forward to winning my first LPGA Tour title tomorrow. I'm going to concentrate on my game tomorrow.

"I've been waiting for this (first victory on the LPGA Tour) for a really long time, and I'm going to try my make it come through. I think it will feel like a dream! So,

yeah, I'm just looking forward to it," she told reporters.

Choi, however, is wary of the threat posed by China's Liu Yan and Australia's Hannah Green, who are in second and third positions respectively.

Yan produced a flawless performance for a bogey-free 7-under 65 to climb into second spot at 15-under 201, while Green fired a 5-under 67 for a three-day total of 14-under 202.

Yan credited patience and composure for her impressive round, noting that the key to her success was embracing the challenging Malaysian weather.

"Golf cannot be perfect. This course can be hard because the weather is very hot, but I enjoy the hot weather because I am from the south of China. So, even in my hometown, it's very hot.

"Tomorrow, I think I'll just play like today - be more patient and more focused on my game. With the weather this hot... so, yeah, I'll just keep tell-

ing myself this," said Yan.

National golfer Kelly Tan knows she owes it to her fans to finish as high as she possibly can in the final round of the Maybank Championship today.

The 32-year-old looks to have found her form just in time when she emerged as the best-performing

Malaysian yesterday, holing six-birdies en route to a 4-under 68 score.

Kelly, who sizzled with birdies on holes 2, 3, 5, 12, 13 and 14, and faltered with bogeys on holes 8 and 9, is in joint 38th spot with six others with a three-day total of 5-under 211.

"It's fun. I mean, it's really fun to be able to play golf in front of my family and close friends. I'm mostly playing abroad, and it's just really nice to have everyone here.

"I think everything (worked well). Hit my driver well and hit my irons well. I had six birdies today and 27 putts, so putting was good... scrambling was good (too).

"When your game clicks, obviously, you can shoot low (numbers). I think that's what I did today," she said.

Meanwhile, Mirabel Ting fired a 3-under 70 to sit in joint 45th position at 4-under 212, while Genevieve Ling carded a 2-over 74 for a 1-under 215 total to be tied at 57th spot.

Ashley Lau (4-over 76) and Liyana Durisic (3-over 75), the other two Malaysians in the fray, ended the day in tied 67th and 71st positions respectively. - Bernama



Choi Hye-Jin

## Fifa need more evidence on heritage players' scandal

**FIFA** has yet to finalise the verdict on the Football Association of Malaysia's (FAM) appeal involving seven national players suspended over alleged document falsification.

The decision, initially expected around 7pm Malaysian time today, is now likely to be delayed to 11pm or even tomorrow, as Fifa's Appeal Committee re-evaluates the evidence and considers possible adjustments to the sanctions.

Sources familiar with the matter told Scoop that the committee has requested additional clarifications on certain ancestry documents submitted by FAM during the appeal process.

"The panel is taking a cautious approach because of the scale and impli-

cations of this case," said one source familiar with the matter.

"There are still some discrepancies in the documents that need to be cross-verified. While the final decision could go either way, the chances of a full acquittal are very slim."

Another official close to the appeals committee added that Fifa is "keen to ensure that no procedural or administrative oversight affects the integrity of the ruling."

"They're not rushing it. Fifa understands the sensitivity of this case - not only for Malaysian football but for how naturalisation and eligibility cases are handled across the world moving forward."

In September, Fifa's Disciplinary

Committee suspended seven players - Facundo Garcés, Rodrigo Holgado, Imanol Machuca, João Figueiredo, Jon Irazabal, Gabriel Arrocha and Héctor Hevel - for 12 months and fined FAM 350,000 Swiss Franc (RM 1.9 million) after ruling that falsified heritage documents were used to justify their eligibility to represent Malaysia.

The controversy has severely dented FAM's credibility, prompting the suspension of its secretary-general and an internal probe into the association's naturalisation process.

If the appeal fails, Malaysia could face further action from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), including match forfeitures for games involving the ineligible players. - scoop.my

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<b>2315</b>	<b>3250</b>	<b>3898</b>	<b>5300</b>
<b>0743</b>	<b>7024</b>	<b>9932</b>	<b>9740</b>
<b>6885</b>	<b>8801</b>	<b>5633</b>	<b>8626</b>
<b>5638</b>	<b>2068</b>	<b>1270</b>	<b>3346</b>

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<b>GROUP 1</b>	<b>0 5 9 1 6 6</b>
<b>GROUP 2</b>	<b>05916</b> OR <b>59166</b>
<b>GROUP 3</b>	<b>0591</b> OR <b>9166</b>
<b>GROUP 4</b>	<b>059</b> OR <b>166</b>
<b>GROUP 5</b>	<b>05</b> OR <b>66</b>
OR <b>91</b>	
<b>GOLDEN NUMBER</b>	<b>00</b>

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SCAN ME



BY IAN PARKER

**MANCHESTER CITY** boss Pep Guardiola (*pic*) believes Bournemouth's early season form shows the strength in depth of the Premier League.

Bournemouth head to the Etihad Stadium tomorrow (12.30am Malaysian time) two points above City in the table – sitting second, four points behind leaders Arsenal – after losing only one of their opening nine games.

With Sunderland also in the top four after a superb start following promotion, there is a fresh look to the top of the table to back up arguments that the concept of the so-called "big six" is increasingly outdated.

"I remember when I was in Munich or Barcelona, I always heard the rumours that in England, everyone could beat everyone, I always had that sense," Guardiola said.

"Maybe Liverpool and ourselves in the past changed that dynamic because we were so consistent in terms of points and arriving every season with 90, 90, 90 points, close to 100 points.

"But, I think the Premier League has always been like this, all the teams can beat each other, it is good.

"At some point like NBA, there is not a dominant team in the last four or five or six years, there is always one different team and everyone can beat everyone.

"I think for the spectator and for the show of the Premier League, it is really, really good."

City have won all eight of their previous Premier League meetings with Bournemouth at home, scoring 31 goals and conceding only five, but that record could face a stern test tomorrow

Bournemouth's superb start comes despite Andoni Iraola losing several key players in a busy summer as Dean Huijsen was sold to Real Madrid, Ilya Zabarnyi to Paris St Germain, Milos Kerkez to Liverpool and Dango Ouattara to Brentford.

"It (shows) how co-ordinated they are with the sporting director, the manager, the players with a clear philosophy that doesn't change," Guardiola said.

"The players change a lot of things but it is impressive when you lose three or four



# Anyone's game

**Bournemouth's early form shows Premier League strength in depth, says Pep**

from the back four to PSG, Real Madrid and Liverpool and you reinvest in the team with new players. There is a lot of good work behind (the scenes)."

Asked how far Bournemouth could go this season, Guardiola added: "That's a question for Iraola. I would say it's just nine games but also in previous seasons, they're consistent. The team, manager, players, a tough opponent, but we know that."

Guardiola said top scorer Erling Haaland would be fit after suffering a knock late in last weekend's 1-0 loss at Aston Villa, while Spain midfielder Rodri could play a part as he works his way back from a muscular injury which has kept him out since before the last international break.

"I think he'll be ready to help, I don't know if from the beginning, but hopefully he can be with us," Guardiola said.

"He's been out a few times and we know how important he is for us."

Bournemouth haven't had to balance multiple commitments since a second-round Carabao Cup defeat way back in August, and perhaps that shows in a virtually clean injury report.

Brazilian striker Evanilson was the only question after he was forced to miss last weekend's 2-0 victory over Nottingham Forest. Iraola says he'll be available tomorrow

"So now it's very difficult for me to make decisions because I have to leave some players out of the squad," Iraola said.

"But it's good, because we are in a lovely place in that sense and we can approach the game in different ways, and I will have to think very well (about) what's going to be the possible starting XI and the options from the bench," Iraola said.

On their start to the season and eight-game unbeaten run, the Cherries boss said: "We are being competitive. We are not just winning easy games.

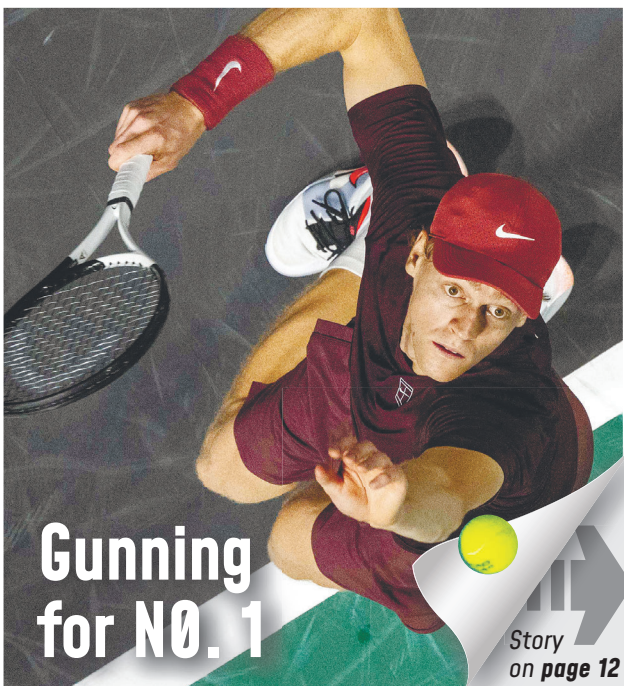
"All games we have played have been quite a level. We are being effective, efficient. Now, the challenge is bigger (against City), facing one of most difficult games you can in world football. We have to raise our level to have chance to take anything."  
 – The Independent/Reuters/Agencies



**MAN CITY vs BOURNEMOUTH**



TOMORROW @ 12.30AM MALAYSIAN TIME



**Gunning for No. 1**

Story on page 12

**BOXING DAY**



**Premier League**

FIXTURE ANNOUNCED

**Sign of times**

Story on page 14



**Choi tightens grip**

Story on page 15