



**Dirty toilets, unsafe water putting lives, dignity at risk**

World Toilet Day a reminder availability of safe, clean and accessible sanitation remains a struggle for many.

Report on page 6

# 'Protect children from online harm'

Report on > page 3

Describing regional data on cyberbullying and digital manipulation as deeply alarming, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi says Asean must urgently act to confront surge in exploitation of minors in cyberspace.



Transport Minister Anthony Loke says the special number plate initiative has helped reduce prices of air tickets for Sabah and Sarawak, provide flight vouchers for students, free licensing programmes for B40 individuals and even social contributions to taxi drivers. – BERNAMA FILEPIC

**Anwar defends use of govt assets during Sabah visit**

'Sitting prime minister bound by protocol to travel with official vehicles and security team regardless of nature of event.'

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**Loke unfazed by 'Menteri Nombor Plate' label**

I don't mind being called anything as long as I can achieve my objectives, says DAP sec-gen.

Report on page 4

# Anwar denies misuse of govt assets

## ‘Prime minister must use official team, vehicles for security’

BY HARITH KAMAL  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has dismissed accusations that he misused government vehicles and security personnel during a recent visit to Sabah, adding that the assets were compulsory national security provisions and had nothing to do with electioneering.

Responding to Pasir Mas MP Ahmad Fadhli Shaari during the Prime Minister’s Question Time, Anwar said a sitting prime minister is bound by protocol to travel with official security team and use government assets regardless of the nature of the event.

“If so, what vehicle should I use? Government vehicles are allowed. A prime minister must use the official security team and official vehicles for any programme because of security considerations.”

He said none of his activities in Sabah were government-organised, reiterating his long-standing rule against using official platforms for partisan events.

“My campaign programmes are

all under the party. There were no government programmes. I prohibit them,” he said, citing the recent “Temu Anwar” session with university students, which he moved off campus to avoid any perception of government involvement.

“I cancelled it and moved it because I did not want the university officially involved in organising a programme linked to me.”

On the widely circulated Sabah corruption video, Anwar said he personally reviewed the footage and agreed it warranted investigation.

However, he said prosecution decisions rest solely with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and the Attorney-General’s Chambers.

“So far, three individuals have been charged. They were prosecuted because MACC determined there was compelling evidence against them.

“The other cases have not been closed and are still under investigation,” he said, dismissing claims of selective action.

“Two of those charged are from parties within the Unity government, so it is not true that we are shielding anyone.”

He added that legal action cannot be dictated purely on the basis of a video.

“I do not want to issue orders to prosecute someone merely based on a video. We must allow the process to proceed and act only where there

is strong evidence.”

Addressing the matter of his political secretary issuing a support letter for a hospital project listing six contractors for the Health Ministry, Anwar said he had issued a stern reprimand.

“He issued the letter and I have given him a firm warning because our rules do not allow it.”

He added that when letters are addressed to the prime minister, the appropriate response is to request a review.

“Anywhere I go, Sabah or elsewhere, I receive dozens of letters, some regarding contracts and we respond with ‘please review’.

“But no support letter can be issued. I agree with Pasir Mas on that.”

## ‘Four reform Bills expected to be tabled next year’

**PETALING JAYA:** Four major institutional reform Bills, related to the ombudsman, freedom of information (FOI), political funding and separation of powers between the attorney-general and the public prosecutor, are now in the consultation phase and expected to be brought to Parliament next year.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday amendments to the Whistleblower Protection Act 2010 are also being readied, with proposals for both stronger safeguards and incentives for those who come forward.

“The relevant ministers have submitted policy decisions for Cabinet approval regarding the ombudsman, FOI, political funding and the distribution of powers between the attorney-general and the public prosecutor.

“All four bills are undergoing engagement, including consultations with Parliament, the Bar Council and other stakeholders, before finalisation.

“Some are expected to be tabled early next year, while others may come mid-year.”

He was responding to a question from Sri Aman MP Datuk Seri Doris

Sophia Brodi on the progress of legal and institutional reforms, seen as central to improving the standing of Malaysia on the Corruption Perceptions Index.

On the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2024–2028, the prime minister said monitoring efforts have intensified, particularly on initiatives to reward proactive enforcement agencies and encourage witness cooperation.

“This includes proposals for agencies actively participating in anti-corruption programmes to be eligible for tax deductions, as well as

allowances for witnesses willing to cooperate.”

Highlighting early gains under NACS, Anwar said enforcement agencies have recorded significant successes in tackling leakages, smuggling and cartel activities, recovering RM15.5 billion.

He added that since NACS was launched on May 7, 2024, a total of 23 sub-strategies have been implemented across 12 ministries and agencies, including the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, with five completed in 2024 and the remaining 18 currently in execution.

– By Harith Kamal

## M’sia seeking synergy in telecom sector, says Fahmi

**AZERBAIJAN:** Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil said Malaysia is looking at avenues for cooperation with India and Iran in the telecommunications sector, particularly involving online safety.

He said the matter was discussed during bilateral meetings with his counterparts, Dr Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani from India and Sattar Hashemi from Iran, at the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2025 on Monday.

“I see that my counterparts, with their experience in telecommunications issues in their respective countries, offer several opportunities that we could explore for cooperation with both countries.

“This includes their experience in overcoming scam issues, online security concerns as well as several telecommunications applications that could benefit the public.”

The meeting was also attended by the senior adviser on International Affairs to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) Tan Sri Mohd Annuar Zaini, MCMC deputy managing director Datuk Zulkarnain Mohd Yasin and Communications Ministry Communications Technology Division secretary Ahmad Norhad Zahari.

Fahmi said Malaysia’s relations with India and Iran would be utilised to develop the telecommunications sector, in line with the aspirations of the country to strengthen digital infrastructure and online security.

He added that a memorandum of understanding with Iran in the telecommunications field is expected to be finalised soon.

“It is being reviewed by the ministry, and I believe that in the near future, we would be ready to sign.”

“I believe it is interesting for us to understand the unique circumstances faced by a country such as Iran.”

In addition to cooperation opportunities, Fahmi also informed both counterparts of the intention of Malaysia to defend its seat on the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Council in the election scheduled for November 2026.

– Bernama

## PM departs for Ethiopia in first leg of official Africa trip

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday departed for Ethiopia for the first leg of a three-country visit to Africa, beginning with a three-day official stop in Addis Ababa until Nov 20 at the invitation of his counterpart, Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed Ali.

This marks Anwar’s first visit to Ethiopia, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Ethiopia, established in January 1965.

A chartered Malaysia Airlines aircraft carrying the prime minister left the KL International Airport (KLIA) yesterday.

During the visit, he will be received by Abiy Ahmed in an official welcoming ceremony at the National Palace before attending a bilateral meeting.

Anwar is accompanied by Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office (Federal Territory) Datuk Seri Zaliha Mustafa, senior government officials as well as a delegation of business leaders.

The reopening of the Malaysian Embassy in Addis Ababa, the seat of the African Union, would also offer opportunities for Malaysia to bolster its relations with the larger African Union.

The prime minister is also scheduled to deliver a special lecture for the Pan-African Youth Union and Ethiopia Youth Council.



Anwar greets media representatives on the chartered plane who will be covering his working visit to Ethiopia, South Africa and Kenya. – BERNAMAPIC

A number of agreements, as well as memoranda of agreement, are expected to be clinched between both countries, including a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in health, an air services agreement and an MoU on cooperation in tourism.

Ethiopia, the most populous

landlocked country in the world, ranked as the 26th largest trading partner of Malaysia in the African continent in 2023.

Bilateral trade between Malaysia and Ethiopia stood at RM446.8 million as of 2023, with exports from Malaysia to Ethiopia valued at RM358.6 million,

representing a 24.6% increase from 2022.

Malaysian exports to Ethiopia comprise electrical and electronic products, palm oil and palm oil-based agricultural products, chemical and chemical products and textiles, apparels and footwear. – Bernama

# 'Alarming rise in online threats against children'

➤ Zahid cites troubling regional data, calls for coordinated Asean measures as M'sia unveils stronger child-protection policy

BY FAIZ RUZMAN  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia and Asean must act with urgency to confront a surge in online child exploitation that is "moving faster than our ability to respond", Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi warned at the 2025 Asean ICT Forum on Child Online Protection yesterday.

Citing regional data, Zahid said early indicators were already "deeply alarming", pointing to findings that 74% of internet users aged 15 and above in Singapore encountered harmful content in 2024.

In Malaysia, he said, about 33% of young people reported having been bullied online, while the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission logged some 9,000 cyberbullying complaints last year – averaging more than 27 cases a day.

"These figures are not harmless. They are symptoms that our safety nets are being stretched thin."

Zahid said artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly magnified risks by allowing predators to clone voices, create deepfakes and manipulate children's identities from anywhere in the world.

"A predator does not need a passport. A dangerous video does not stop at immigration. One harmful post can reach 11 Asean countries in minutes," he said, stressing that digital threats now travel effortlessly across borders.

To counter this, he said Malaysia is strengthening its whole-of-government approach through updated cybercrime laws, expanded digital forensics capabilities and the integration of digital literacy from early schooling.

"We must protect children without limiting their potential. We do not want to disconnect them from technology – we want to empower them to use it safely



Zahid said AI has rapidly magnified risks by allowing predators to clone voices, create deepfakes and manipulate children's identities during his speech at the 2025 Asean ICT Forum yesterday. – ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THE SUN

and confidently."

Zahid also outlined three regional priorities under Malaysia's Asean Chairmanship: a cross-border child-protection information exchange network, a shared digital forensic protocol and a unified Asean digital guardianship curriculum for schools.

"These are practical and high-impact measures that can be implemented quickly. If we move with courage today, our children will inherit a digital world that strengthens them and not scars them."

Meanwhile, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri, who launched the National Child Policy and National Child Action Plan 2026–2030, said the new roadmap establishes a clear national direction for safeguarding children's rights and wellbeing in an increasingly digital environment.

Backed by 141 actions under 16 strategic priorities, she said the policy enhances

protections against bullying, exploitation and emotional harm while boosting digital literacy, ethical technology use and resilience among children.

"This is a milestone that reflects Malaysia's commitment to ensuring every child grows up in a safe, nurturing and empowering environment."

Nancy said technology has reshaped childhood, presenting opportunities alongside risks such as grooming, misinformation and emotional fatigue in hyper-connected spaces.

"These challenges do not stop at borders and our solutions cannot stop at borders either. Protecting children requires collaboration across governments, industry, educators, communities and young people themselves."

She urged Asean to deepen cooperation through existing regional frameworks, adding that the digital future children inherit must be built with responsibility, compassion and a shared sense of duty.

## Predators leveraging AI to target minors: Unicef

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Southeast Asia is facing an unprecedented surge of AI-driven online child exploitation and Malaysia is already showing early signs of the same high-risk patterns, Unicef said, based on findings revealed at the 2025 Asean ICT Forum on Child Protection yesterday.

Speaking to theSun in an exclusive interview, Unicef regional adviser for child protection Rachel Harvey said Malaysia mirrors a regional trend where children are increasingly exposed to online grooming, coercion and the circulation of non-consensual images, with emerging technologies accelerating the danger.

"There is a serious situation in Asean and Malaysia is very much part of that landscape.

"Unicef's study shows up to one in 20 children in this region experienced online sexual abuse in the preceding year and that figure is almost certainly underreported. Children often cannot speak out."

Harvey said high internet penetration

brings opportunity but also sharp increases in harm, with the most rapid shift driven by generative AI.

"In the last six months alone, companion bots have learned how to sexually engage with children, initiating inappropriate conversations, requesting and sending images back.

"These systems never existed a few years ago, so the laws and safeguards designed back then simply could not imagine today's risks."

She warned that predators are no longer acting alone.

"Organised crime is using tech, using AI, using impersonation to lure children into exploitation, trafficking networks and scam centres. The risks are multiple and intersecting, both online and offline.

"This is a cross-border problem. No country can solve it alone. But with shared responsibility and unified action, we can make the digital world safer for every child.

## Luxury vehicle firm probed for tax fraud

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Inland Revenue Board (IRB) has uncovered tax non-compliance by a company suspected of being involved in a luxury vehicle cartel network, including failing to declare actual income from sales transactions amounting to approximately RM70 million.

IRB, in a statement yesterday, said it conducted an operation against the company yesterday at several locations in the Klang Valley, including its business premises, the residence of the company's director and an auditing firm.

"Searches were conducted to obtain documents and evidence related to tax non-compliance.

"Initial investigations revealed that the company failed to report actual income from sales transactions amounting to RM70 million."

The case is being investigated under subsection 112(1A) of the Income Tax Act (ITA) 1967, involving the company and paragraph 113(1)(a) of the ITA involving the company's directors.

IRB said among the tax evasion cases currently under investigation – and those which will be brought to court – are cases involving gold mining activities, scams, misuse of welfare status to conceal transactions, gambling proceeds and other illegal activities, as well as businesses owned by foreigners which have failed to declare income.

"The Board remains firm in upholding the integrity of the country's tax system and will not compromise with any attempt to evade taxes.

"It will ensure that all parties fulfil their tax obligations for the wellbeing of the nation and its people."

IRB CEO Datuk Dr Abu Tariq Jamaluddin, when contacted, confirmed the operation, noting that it forms part of IRB's targeted efforts to strengthen tax compliance, particularly in sectors involving high-value transactions such as luxury vehicles.

"Non-compliance involving large sums not only undermines national revenue, but also compromises the fairness of the tax system and should not be taken lightly." – Bernama

## Over RM2b for key initiatives in Sabah

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission has confirmed that the RM2 billion allocation announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for Sabah will fund several key initiatives currently being implemented or planned in the state.

One of the major projects is the Smart City initiative for Kota Kinabalu, a new venture worth over RM300 million in collaboration with the Kota Kinabalu City Hall. The agreement was signed in December 2024.

This initiative will include expanding fibre optic networks, providing public WiFi, installing integrated 4G and 5G smart poles and deploying smart CCTV cameras linked to the Integrated Operations Centre.

"To further expand coverage in Sabah, Jendela 2 will be enhanced with 800 new locations, particularly in rural areas and islands, with an estimated total cost of RM1.4 billion," MCMC said in a statement yesterday.

The allocation will cover both development and operational costs over a five-year period, with the project expected to benefit 3.7 million people in Sabah and achieve 100% coverage in populated areas.

As of September 2025, 131 National Information Dissemination (Nadi) centres are operational statewide, with an operational cost of around RM210 million for five years.

"Nadi provides equal opportunities, particularly for rural communities, to participate in the knowledge-based economy through community learning spaces, internet access, skills training, online services, and digital literacy programmes."

The government is also rolling out a fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) project for the Army Family Housing in military camps across Sabah, providing fibre optic connections directly to the homes of military personnel. – Bernama

Gass said blocking children from the internet is not feasible.

"Children are online because the world is online. Real protection is not about cutting access – it is about ensuring the entire ecosystem safe." – By Faiz Ruzman

# 'Labels reflect something more meaningful'

BY HARITH KAMAL AND KIRTINEE RAMESH  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Transport Minister Anthony Loke (*pic*) says he takes pride in being called "Menteri Nombor Plate" (number plate minister) and even "Menteri Baby Chair", a dig referencing his push for child safety, as long as the work he does continues to deliver real benefits to Malaysians.

Loke said such labels reflect something more meaningful: that the public is closely watching, reacting to and engaging with the ministry's initiatives.

## On public nicknames and criticism

**theSun:** You have been called by critics recently as "Menteri Nombor Plate" and "Menteri Baby Chair" on social media. How do you take these labels—as criticism, humour or proof that the public is paying attention?

**Loke:** I take pride in that. It means that what we do has been noticed. If you are not being called by any label, and someone calls you "Menteri Nombor Plate", to me, it is not a negative connotation.

It shows that, and I always try to show, if I can use that for a good cause, why not? No previous transport ministers have been called that because they have never been able to think outside the box to use that revenue for a good cause.

Because of the number plate initiative, we have been able to reduce the prices of air tickets for Sabah and Sarawak. We have also provided flight vouchers for students, free licensing programmes for many B40 individuals, free helmets and even social contributions to taxi drivers. All of these are funded from the revenue generated by the special number plates.

So, I do not mind being called anything, as long as I can achieve my objectives.

## On online abuse vs real-world feedback

**theSun:** When the media cover your events,

you often say a lot of detailed things, but online, people tend to read only the headlines and rarely go beyond them. How do you feel about that?

◆ **Transport Minister Anthony Loke says he has no qualms about being labelled 'Menteri Nombor Plate' or 'Menteri Baby Chair', insisting such monikers only prove the public is paying attention. In this final part of the Sun's exclusive interview, Loke speaks candidly about criticism, visibility, political pressure and why he measures success not by online commentary but by the impact of his policies on Malaysians.**

**Loke:** I do not really bother about online criticism. Sometimes, it does not reflect what actually happens on the ground because certain online narratives are driven by specific interest groups.

To me, I have always adopted this attitude: I will not be here forever. Being a minister is a great honour and a great opportunity. During my term, I just want to do what I feel is right. If I am able to achieve something during my term, I will have no regrets when I leave office.

Whatever people call me or criticise me for—because politicians will always be criticised—if someone cannot handle criticism, they might as well not join politics.

## On visibility, performance and political pressure

**theSun:** You are one of the more visible and hands-on ministers. Many say you are doing



well, some not so much. Why do you think some people still single out your actions?

**Loke:** We cannot win over everyone. But the fact that many people acknowledge my role and some of my work is motivation enough, it is good enough for me.

Firstly, we cannot please everyone, there is no way to do that. At the end of the day, if more than half the population agrees with what we do, that is sufficient. In a democracy, you cannot win over everyone. There will always be critics and people who disagree, and that

is normal.

Being in government is a very different ballgame. You must have a sense of responsibility and a sense of doing the right thing for the nation. Sometimes, politicians are still very concerned about the next election. But sometimes, you must balance political considerations with doing what is right, even if it is not always popular.

Overall, if it is good for the country, people will appreciate it in the end. You do not have to worry about the future when you are focused on doing what is right for the country.

## Olive Ridley turtle released after year-long recovery

**GEORGE TOWN:** A female Olive Ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) was released back into Penang waters on Monday after undergoing a year-long rehabilitation, following severe injuries to its front right flipper caused by entanglement in a drifting fishing net.

The Agriculture and Food Security Ministry said the 15-year-old turtle was rescued by local fishermen in the waters off Tanjung Tokong and handed over to the Pantai Kerachut Turtle Conservation Centre for treatment and recovery.

"The rehabilitation process was supported by the centre's staff, the Penang Fisheries Department and the Fisheries Research Institute Rantau Abang, while the release was officiated by ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Isham Jalil."

Department director-general Datuk Adnan Hussain said the release marked the success of conservation efforts and the department's continued commitment to ensuring the sustainability of the Olive Ridley turtle species in Malaysia.

"From 2021 to this year, 15,485 hatchlings have been successfully released. This conservation activity has also drawn visitor



Adnan said the release marked the department's commitment to ensuring the sustainability of the turtle species in Malaysia. — PIC COURTESY OF PENANG FISHERIES DEPARTMENT FACEBOOK PAGE

interest, with the centre's Pantai Kerachut branch receiving 36,353 visitors up to October, comprising 24,392 domestic and 11,961 international visitors."

He added that the centre has also carried out various educational briefings, public awareness programmes and volunteer activities from January to October. — Bernama

## Call to boost female labour participation

BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysia has made progress in closing the gender pay gap, but more female workforce participation and leadership remain key to driving economic growth and innovation.

TalentCorp chairperson Wong Shu Qi said Malaysia has made concrete progress, with the gender wage gap in median pay shrinking from about RM200 in 2023 to RM18 this year, but female labour participation remains low.

She highlighted the need for strong public-private collaboration to meet Malaysia's 60% female labour participation target by 2030, stressing that family-friendly policies and equal opportunities are key to enabling women to thrive.

"Millions of women across the region remain outside the workforce or are concentrated in lower-paid, less secure jobs.

"The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025 showed that Malaysia ranks 108th out of 146 countries, which is an improvement but still far from where the nation aspires to be," she said during the Asia-Pacific Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) forum yesterday.

Wong said Malaysia's female labour force participation reached 56.5% in 2024, with women holding 28% of board seats in public-listed companies, compared with only 5% in 2007.

"This is why WEPs are crucial, providing a practical framework to turn commitment into concrete action across leadership, workplace practices, supply chains and community engagement," she said, adding that inaction wastes talent, slows innovation and weakens the economy.

TalentCorp Wanita Mywira assistant vice-president Natasha Azreen Alias said despite the challenges women face, the country is actively addressing these issues, prioritising them and working swiftly to close the gaps.

"One of our main goals is to see more women in leadership roles. We run programmes and initiatives to support women in reaching these positions and we help them develop their careers so that they could continue advancing up the professional ladder.

"This is the ecosystem we have built, supporting women at every stage, from education onward. We aim to tackle challenges early, rather than waiting until women are already in their careers, ensuring support from the very start."

She said the agency is working with universities to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, familiarising women with industry norms and key opportunities in critical, in-demand roles so that they enter the workforce with awareness, understanding and a strong sense of the importance of their roles.

She emphasised that sectors with persistent gender imbalances include digital, green economy and artificial intelligence.

"While opportunities exist, many roles require full commitment, offer limited flexibility and lack policies that support female participation, making it harder for women to enter these fields."

She said although some still believe only men can be leaders, progress has been made and many women are ready to step up, adding that the agency works with companies to build a pipeline of professional women prepared for leadership while shifting cultural and corporate mindsets.

"There is still much work to be done, and it is important to collaborate with partners to ensure this is not seen solely as a women's issue. It is an ecosystem that must be managed collectively.

"Addressing the gender pay gap is critical as disparities between men and women remain significant. We need strategies to manage these gaps so that they are not as wide in the future."



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BAYU TIMUR RESIDENCES | Nama Pemaju: Bayu Timur - No Lesen Pemaju: 8700/04-2028/120A | Tempoh Sah: 29/04/2011 - 28/04/2028 - No Permit Iklan & Jualan: 8700-8/06-2028/0488(A) | Hak Milik Tanah: Pegangan Kekal - Pihak Berkuasa Yang Meluluskan: Majlis Bandaraya Shah Alam - No Rujukan: MBSA/BCN/BB/600-11P/BSK.32/2012-2023 - Tarikh Dijangka Siap: September 2029 - Bebanan Tanah: Caidan (Affin Bank Berhad) - Pemaju: Pakar Angkasa Sdn Bhd (220249-A) - Pejabat Jualan: Berjaya Property Gallery, Jalan Sungai Rasau C 32/C, Seksyen 32, 40460 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan - Jenis Hartanah: Kondominium - Bilik: Bilik Block A & B (96 Unit) Block C & D (24 Tingkat) - Bilik: Block A & B (96 Unit) Block C & D (422 Unit) - Luas Binaan: 1,000kps (Denis C1) 1,280kps (Denis D) - Harga Jualan: Block A (Mina) RM591,360 - (Maks) RM729,792 - Block B (Mina) RM591,360 - (Maks) RM729,792 - Block C (Mina) RM585,200 - (Maks) RM750,000 - Bilik Tempat Letak Kereta: 2 atau 3 - Dikaun Untuk Bumiputera 7% - JESSELTON COURTYARD | No Lesen Pemaju: 2874/03-2028/1438(A) - Tempoh Sah: Lesen: 14/03/2006 - 13/03/2028 - No. Permit Jualan dan Iklan: 2874-7/05-2027/0364(A) | S1 - Tempoh Sah: Permisi: 03/05/2024 - 02/05/2027 - Pemaju: Berjaya Land Development Sdn. Bhd. (170191-X) - Alamat Pemaju: Lot 13-01A, Level 13 (East Wing), Berjaya Times Square, No. 1, Jalan Imbi, 55100, Kuala Lumpur - No. Telefon: +604-6582329 - Nama Pemaju: Perumahan: Jesselton Courtyard at Jesselton Selatan - Rumah Teres - Harga Minimum: RM431,000 - Harga Maksimum: RM40,892,000 - Luas Tanah: 295m2 - 565m2 - Jumlah Tingkat: 4 Tingkat - Jumlah Unit: 32 - Rumah Bandar - Harga Minimum: RM3,322,000 - Harga Maksimum: RM5,786,000 - Luas Binaan: 254m2 - 460m2 - Jumlah Tingkat: 5 Tingkat - Petak Aksesori: Laman, Beranda, Laman Dalam dan Tempat Letak Kereta (Kecuali Petak Letak Kereta Pelawat) - Pegangan: Kekal - Bebanan (Caidan) Tanah: Malayan Banking Berhad - Tempoh Bebanan (Caidan) Tanah: 84 Bulan (Tarikh Tamat Tempoh: 31/12/2020) - Dikaun 5% untuk Bumiputera - Tarikh Dijangka Siap: 26/07/2025 - Pihak Berkuasa yang Meluluskan: Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang - No. Kelulusan Pelan Bangunan: HBP/7LCS-CSC/18704/2023 - TIMES SQUARE 2 | Pemaju: Berjaya Times Square Sdn. Bhd. (119614-V) - No. Lesen Pemaju: 3048/06-2028/0165(A) - Tempoh Sah: 23/06/2023 - 22/06/2028 - No. Permit Iklan: 3048-1/0-2028/742 (A) | S1 - Tempoh Sah: 17/05/2023 - 16/05/2025 - No. Kelulusan Pelan Bangunan: BP 1x OSC.2021.2342 - Pihak Berkuasa yang Meluluskan: Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur - Pegangan Tanah: Kekal - Caidan Tanah: Al Rajhi Bank & Investment Corporation (Malaysia) Bhd. - Tarikh Dijangka Siap: Okt. 2027 - Jenis Hartanah: Resident Servis - Jumlah Unit: 829 Unit - Harga: RM688,000 (Min.) - RM2,649,000 (Maks.) - Dikaun Bumiputera: 5% - OAKA RESIDENCES | Pemaju: Berjaya Hartanah Berhad (232392-U) - Alamat Pemaju: Aras 12, Timur, Berjaya Times Square, No. 1, Jalan Imbi, 55100 Kuala Lumpur - No. Lesen Pemaju: 5660/01-2028/0354(A) - Tempoh Sah: 21/12/2023 - 20/12/2028 - No. Permit Iklan dan Jualan: 5660-14/02-2027/0165(A) | S1 - Tempoh Sah: 20/12/2024 - 19/12/2027 - Pegangan Tanah: Pegangan Kekal - Bebanan Tanah: CIMB Bank Berhad - Pihak Berkuasa yang Meluluskan: Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur - No. Rujukan Kelulusan Pelan Bangunan: DBK.LKB.BP.S3 OSC.2022.2568 (17) - Tarikh Dijangka Siap: Februari 2028 - Jenis Rumah: Kondominium - Jumlah Unit: 350 Unit - Blok A (175 Unit) - Blok B (175 Unit) - Harga: RM654,000 (Min.) - RM1,535,000 (Maks.) - Dikaun Bumiputera 5%

IKLAN INI TELAH DILULUSKAN OLEH JABATAN PERUMAHAN NEGARA.  
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## Stricter screening at ports after big smuggling cases

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A 100% scanning policy, the use of artificial intelligence (AI)-based inspection systems and mandatory pre-declaration for every container at ports are among the strict measures implemented following two major drug smuggling incidents at Port Klang in 2023.

Customs Department director-general Datuk Anis Rizana Mohd Zainudin said the scanning, including for export containers, has been in effect since Nov 15, 2023, with Malaysia currently the only country implementing this, according to a World Customs Organisation review.

"Although the measure faced opposition from various parties, including industry players and politicians, it is necessary to ensure the integrity and security of the country's entry points."

In 2023, two drug smuggling cases were uncovered after the seizure of 376kg of heroin on March 13 and 662kg of methamphetamine on Oct 4 by the Australian Border Force.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim touched on the cases once again and emphasised that aggressive measures have been taken by the Madani government after decades of inaction against smuggling cartels and syndicates.

He said aggressive action by relevant agencies have resulted in seizures worth RM15.5 billion, with several individuals prosecuted in court.

Anis Rizana said improvements also included the upgrading of scanning equipment with AI technology, dual-angle and dual energy imaging, with the acquisitions approved by Anwar, who is also Finance minister.

She added that the combination of AI technology and Customs officers' expertise has improved efficiency and integrity in container clearance processes, particularly at Port Klang.

"The department has also enforced rotation of officers handling scanners in accordance with the Public Service Department circular requiring at least 50% rotation."

"The Import Export Supporting Document System, introduced in September 2023, also reduces physical interaction as documents are stored online. This system was upgraded to MyCIEDS in January this year with improved audit capabilities."

She added that officers have undergone Neuro-Linguistic Programming courses to enhance the ability to detect suspicious behaviour.

Anis Rizana said these measures have increased revenue collection to RM62.47 billion from January to October this year, compared with RM53.63 billion during the same period last year. — Bernama

# Dirty toilets endanger health and dignity

➤ Access to clean water and proper sanitation is basic necessity: Specialist

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Dirty toilets and unsafe water are putting lives and dignity at risk, experts warned ahead of World Toilet Day today.

Observed annually on Nov 19 to highlight the global sanitation crisis, the day is a reminder that access to safe, clean and accessible sanitation remains a struggle for many.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia public health medicine specialist Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh said access to clean water and proper sanitation is not just a basic necessity, but also underpins public health, safety and human dignity.

"Clean water is essential for drinking, cooking and hygiene. It must be free from microbes and harmful pathogens even before boiling."

"Without it, communities face higher risks of waterborne diseases, such as dysentery, fever, diarrhoea, vomiting and weight gain."

"These issues are especially dangerous for children, pregnant women and the elderly," she added, noting that poor sanitation could contaminate water sources with sewage and faecal matter, fuelling



Sharifa said poor sanitation could also lead to urinary tract infections, vaginitis, kidney infections and septic abortion. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN

disease outbreaks.

She said clean water and sanitation are also vital for human productivity, environmental health and economic growth.

She also said women and girls are disproportionately affected when water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are inadequate.

"Without safe WASH facilities, they become more vulnerable to abuse, attacks and illness. It limits their ability to study, work and live with dignity."

The challenge is especially acute during menstruation or when safe, private spaces to urinate, defecate or wash are unavailable.

In many low-resource

communities, some have to walk long distances, sometimes to rivers or communal taps, to access water.

Poor sanitation could also lead to urinary tract infections, vaginitis, kidney infections, septic abortion and even early labour, said Sharifa.

"Improving WASH facilities in schools, at home, workplaces and public areas is a crucial step towards promoting gender equity."

She also highlighted the impact on children's health and education.

"Clean facilities reduce waterborne diseases, lower absenteeism and prevent infections."

She emphasised that lasting progress requires long-term solutions, including policy

reforms, community participation, infrastructure investment and designs that prevent contamination.

"Clean water and sanitation are essential not just to reduce disease but also for health, dignity and overall wellbeing."

"The government needs to ensure clean water and sanitation are provided for rural areas and urban poor."

"As a community, we all play a role by keeping our environment clean, disposing of trash properly, washing ourselves to prevent disease and saving water. Water is a luxury and should not be wasted."

The realities of sanitation work are best understood by those on the front lines, including a veteran janitor at a corporate office known as Kak Ros.

She cleans toilets and stressed that maintaining hygiene is vital.

"People often leave toilets very dirty and do not flush, which makes my job harder."

"In the female toilets, I often find blood stains during menstruation. In the male toilets, it is often unflushed, leaving a mess."

Her routine includes wiping sinks, mopping floors, restocking toilet paper and keeping cubicles clean.

One of her biggest challenges is dealing with inconsiderate users, who leave wet floors, unflushed toilets and litter.

"It is not pleasant but we just do our best."

She said public cooperation would make a huge difference.

"If people flush, throw rubbish in the bin and keep the cubicles dry, it will make the toilets much cleaner for everyone."

"Most people do not see our job unless the toilet is dirty. But a simple 'thank you' really makes my day. It reminds me that my work matters."

Her message to the public is simple as she said: "Treat the toilet like your own. If everyone plays their part, it stays clean for everyone."

## M'sians expose neglect of hygiene in public restrooms

**PETALING JAYA:** From flooded floors to missing bidets and extortionate entry fees, Malaysians are criticising public toilets, exposing a shocking neglect of basic hygiene standards.

A Reddit thread inviting users to share their public restroom experiences was widely spread, drawing tales that range from the inconvenient to the nightmarish.

Electronic-Contact15 said: "0/10 do not recommend. Why do public toilets in Malaysia only have water hoses without the gun???"

Another user vita1611 said bidet heads are often stolen.

GuardianSpear described a flooded restroom at the Road Transport Department office in Shah Alam and said: "I needed to pee badly. As I was standing at the urinal, I could feel the water on the floor

seeping through my shoes and into my socks."

leepinkdesu joked about the public toilet in Pulau Ketam and said: "Just go straight to sea."

Entry fees were also a sore point.

CN8YLW said: "It is worse when they are collecting 50 sen to enter and the toilet is so dirty. That is not an entry fee, that is extortion."

Others, such as Bishbosh\_91, admitted that they usually seek out mosque toilets, avoiding public facilities altogether.

However, not all experiences were negative.

karlkry mentioned improvements since Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming pushed for cleaner toilets.

"After the minister pushed for a cleaner public toilet policy, it has

become cleaner. Sure, it is old, but definitely cleaner than before."

The thread also highlighted the often-overlooked work of janitorial staff who keep these spaces functional under challenging conditions.

theSun also spoke to Malaysians who offered their perspectives on public restroom conditions.

Ariana, 27, said public toilets in Malaysia fail both hygiene and religious standards.

"Most have automatic pipes that spray directly into the bowl. I cannot be sure if it cleans me properly. As a Muslim, I feel like I have not cleaned myself properly before prayer."

She added that the water often doesn't reach where it should, making proper cleaning difficult.

By contrast, she praised Japan's approach and said: "Tissues can be

thrown directly into the toilet bowls and instructions even ask users to 'please' dispose of tissues in the bowl and flush."

"Malaysia should look into this technology and provide options for privacy, such as sound masking, so that people can use cubicles without worrying about noise."

Kamarrudin, 28, called for practical and cultural improvements in public toilets.

"Companies should stop implementing dry toilets and ensure proper maintenance."

"People need to follow proper flushing and hygiene habits. Each cubicle should have a dustbin for tissues, hand sanitiser and soap. With these basic steps, public toilets could be far more usable and hygienic."

— BY KIRTINEE RAMESH

## Man escapes jail sentence for breaching restriction order

**PUTRAJAYA:** A secondhand car dealer escaped jail sentence after a Court of Appeal substituted his two-year imprisonment with a caution for breaching a restriction order linked to alleged gang activities.

A three-member bench chaired by justice Datuk Azmi Ariffin dismissed Michael Liew's appeal against conviction, but exercised its discretion under Section 384 of the Criminal

Procedure Code to issue a caution and discharge.

Liew, 45, had been found drunk and unconscious at a coffee shop in Kuala Terengganu at 10.30pm on Sept 13, 2022, despite a court order requiring him to stay home from 8pm to 6am.

Azmi, in delivering the court's decision on Monday, said the court took into account that Liew had

undergone a two-year restriction order and had no other offences except for the offence before the appellate court.

He said Liew had served his restriction order in full and led his own life without any other offences.

The restriction order, signed by the Prevention of Crime Act (Poca) board chairman under the Poca Act 1959, required Liew to remain indoors in the

Kuala Terengganu district from Oct 6, 2021 to June 16, 2023 unless granted permission by the district police chief.

Section 15 (4) of Poca provides between two and 10 years' jail if found guilty for breaching the order.

On Aug 6, 2023, the Magistrate's Court convicted Liew for breaching the restriction order by being out of his house in Terengganu.

The High Court, on March 31 last

year, upheld the decision of the Magistrate's Court.

Liew, who had been released on RM16,000 bail in one surety pending the appeal, will have the amount returned.

Lawyers Datuk N. Sivananthan and Nabila Habib represented Liew while DPPs Mohamad Arif Aizzuddin Masrom and Mohd Zain Ibrahim appeared for the prosecution. — Bernama

# Japan-China crisis deepens

## Business leaders call for diplomatic resolution

**BEIJING:** Japan has warned its citizens in China to step up safety precautions and avoid crowded places amid a deepening dispute over Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's comments on Taiwan.

The advisory issued by Japan's embassy in China came as a senior Foreign Ministry official travelled to Beijing to hold talks yesterday with his Chinese counterpart to try and tamp down tensions.

China has urged its citizens not to travel to Japan, in what could deal a sizeable blow to Japan's economy given Chinese make up nearly a quarter of all tourists there.

Takaichi sparked the most serious diplomatic clash in years when she told Japanese lawmakers this month that an attack on Taiwan threatening Japan's survival could trigger a military response.

In response, a Chinese diplomat in Japan posted a threatening comment aimed at Takaichi on social media. That drew a strong rebuke from Tokyo but has failed to stem a wave of vitriolic commentaries aimed at her in Chinese state media.

"We have made judgments based on comprehensive consideration of the security situation in the country or region, as well as its political and social conditions," government spokesperson Minoru Kihara said yesterday about the safety notice.

Noting the media coverage in China, the Japanese embassy there had on Monday reminded citizens to respect local customs and be careful in their interactions with Chinese people. It asked citizens to be aware of their surroundings when outside, advising them to not travel alone and urging extra caution when travelling with children.

"If you see a person or group that looks even slightly suspicious, do not approach them and leave the area immediately," the embassy notice said.

"In case anyone was in doubt, the United States is fully committed to the defence of Japan, which includes the Senkaku Islands. And formations of Chinese coast guard ships won't change that," US ambassador to Japan George Glass said.

This week's G20 summit in South Africa provided a potential forum to help ease tensions but China said its premier has no plans to meet Takaichi on the sidelines.

Kihara said nothing has been decided about bilateral meetings during G20, but that Japan remains open to dialogue with China.

As well as tourism, Japan is heavily dependent on China for supply of critical minerals for everything from electronics to cars.

"If we rely too heavily on a country that resorts to economic coercion the moment something displeases it, that creates risks not only for supply chains but also for tourism," Economic Security Minister Kimi Onoda told a press conference yesterday.

"We need to recognise that it's dangerous to be economically dependent on somewhere that poses such risks," she added, responding to a question about China's calls for its citizens to avoid travel to Japan.

Trade Minister Ryosei Akazawa said there had been no particular changes in China's export control measures on rare earths and other materials as of yet.

The heads of Japan's three business federations met Takaichi on Monday and urged dialogue to resolve the diplomatic tensions.

"Political stability is a prerequisite for economic exchange," Yoshinobu Tsutsui, chairman of Japan's biggest business lobby Keidanren, told reporters after the meeting.

Japan's refusal to retract its statements meant its de-escalatory efforts had failed to mollify Beijing, Cornell University's China foreign policy expert Allen Carlson said.

"As a result, the two countries now stand on a knife's edge." – Reuters



Japanese Director-General of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Masaaki Kanai (left) and Chinese Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs Liu Jinsong (right) depart after a meeting at the Foreign Ministry in Beijing yesterday. – AFP/IC

## Pay US\$500m tax bill, Thaksin told

**BANGKOK:** Thailand's Supreme Court ordered jailed former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra on Monday to pay back taxes over the sale of his telecoms firm, the judiciary said, with reports putting the sum due at around half a billion dollars.

In 2006, Thaksin was dogged by corruption allegations and mired in controversy over the tax-free sale of shares in his company, Shin Corp.

Later that year he was ousted as prime minister in a coup and then went into exile for more than a decade.

The 76-year-old politician, one of Thailand's richest people, is serving a prison sentence in Bangkok for corruption during his time in office.

On Monday, the Supreme Court overruled an appeals court decision in the tax case, "forcing

Thaksin to follow the order by the Revenue Department to pay tax," said court spokesman Suriyan Hongvilai.

Suriyan did not provide the specific sum to be paid nor the court's reasoning for its ruling.

Several Thai media outlets reported that the court ordered Thaksin to pay US\$540 million (RM2.3 billion) in tax liabilities and fines.

Tax officials had slapped the former prime minister with a US\$500 million bill in 2017, resurrecting a dispute at the centre of the country's political rift between the populist politician and the military establishment.

The controversy centred around whether Thaksin should have paid taxes on the sale of Shin Corp to Singapore's Temasek Holdings in 2006.

The furore over the deal, which netted the Shinawatra family a US\$1.9-billion windfall, was a lightning rod for opposition to his government.

Protests culminated in the coup that booted him from office and sparked years of debilitating political infighting between his supporters and opponents.

The Shinawatra clan has for two decades been the key foe of Thailand's pro-military, pro-royalty elite, who view their populist brand of politics as a threat to the traditional social order.

But the Shinawatra dynasty has faced a series of legal and political setbacks, including the court-ordered removal of Thaksin's daughter, Paetongtarn, as prime minister in August over an ethics breach. – AFP

## Marcos rejects drug abuse claims

**MANILA:** The Philippine president's office said yesterday that claims by his estranged sister that he uses illicit drugs are baseless and should not be taken seriously.

Speaking at an anti-corruption rally on Monday, Senator Imee Marcos said, without providing evidence, that her brother had struggled with drug use since their youth and that it had persisted to the present day.

"It is the reason for the flood of corruption," she said.

Presidential Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro told a press briefing yesterday that "it is a story without value."

She cited a drug test Marcos took in 2021, when he was campaigning for president, that yielded negative results.

President Marcos has faced accusations of illicit drug use before. His predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, had said Marcos was included in the drug agency's so-called "narco-list" that was submitted to him when he was mayor of Davao City, a charge which the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency has denied.

Imee Marcos is an ally of Duterte and says she no longer speaks to her brother.

She was elected as an independent senator in May's midterm elections, and ran with the backing of Vice-President Sara Duterte, daughter of the former president and political rival of President Marcos.

Imee Marcos has criticised her brother's policies, including moves to deepen security ties with the United States, which are in contrast to Duterte's pro-China stance.

The president's son, Congressman Ferdinand Alexander "Sandro" Marcos, issued a statement defending his father and calling his aunt's assertions "a web of lies aimed at destabilising this government to advance her own political ambitions." – Reuters

### BRIEFS

#### VIETNAM ARRESTS GERMAN JOURNALIST

**HANOI:** Police in Vietnam are prosecuting a Berlin-based journalist and news website editor known for critical reports about the leaders of the Southeast Asian nation, accusing him of anti-state activities. Le Trung Khoa, 54, was accused of "making, storing, spreading information, materials, items for the purpose of opposing the state", the Public Security Ministry said in a statement. Authorities have approved the decision to prosecute Khoa and an order to arrest him. Khoa, editor in chief of the news site *Thoibao.de*, said the effort to prosecute him was a government "farce" and part of its strategy against the news site, which cannot be accessed from Vietnam and is not subject to its censorship. The ministry said Khoa holds a Vietnamese passport. On his social media account, Khoa said he was also a German. – Reuters

#### TAIWAN DETAINS HONG KONG SPY SUSPECT

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan said yesterday it had detained a Chinese citizen on suspicion of espionage after breaking up a plot to entice serving and retired military personnel to collect classified information. The Justice Ministry's Investigation Bureau said a Chinese citizen with Hong Kong residency, whom it identified as Ding, had acted on the instructions of the Chinese military to collect classified information. It said Ding recruited two retired military officers as core members of the spying group to then recruit serving personnel. Ding, along with six others, have been detained, it said. – Reuters



# Ministers take over UN climate negotiations

## EU defends carbon tax

**BELEM:** Ministers took over UN climate negotiations in Brazil on Monday as COP30 entered its final stretch, with nations split on key issues and the EU defending a carbon tax criticised by China and others.

Ministers arrived and delivered speeches to kickstart the second week of talks in the Amazonian city of Belem, with countries debating language over weak commitments, insufficient financial pledges and trade barriers.

One of the biggest bones of contention is a flagship European Union policy, dubbed a "carbon tax" on imports.

"Pricing carbon is something that we need to pursue with as many as possible, as quickly as possible," the bloc's climate commissioner, Wopke Hoekstra, told the gathering.

China, India and other allied countries want COP30 to adopt a decision against unilateral trade barriers – a dig at the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

Tested since 2023 and set to become fully operational next year, CBAM targets imports of carbon-intensive goods such as steel, aluminum, cement, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen.

The head of China's COP30 delegation, Li Gao, said last week that nations should "avoid the negative impact of, for example, geopolitical unilateralism or protectionism."

EU and Chinese officials are due to hold talks on the issue, which has dominated discussions among delegates in sweltering Belem.

"We're not going to be lured into the suggestion that CBAM is a unilateral trade measure. And in that realm, we're also not going to discuss it," Hoekstra said in a news conference.

Another divisive issue was a push by island states – backed by Latin American nations and the EU – for COP30 to respond to the latest projections showing the world will fail to limit warming to 1.5°C.

But major emerging countries, from China to Saudi Arabia, are wary of any text that implies they are not doing enough to curb climate change.

"For Small Island Developing States, 1.5°C is not a political slogan. It is a non-negotiable survival threshold for our people, our culture, and our livelihoods," said Steven Victor, the environment minister of Palau and chair of the Alliance of Small Island States.



Greenpeace set up in Belem a cardboard box display representing the Eiffel Tower to protest the 'fragility of the Paris Agreement'. – AFP/PIIC

Host nation Brazil wants COP30 to send an ambitious signal on fossil fuels, but the form it will take – a UN decision, which requires consensus, or a separate declaration from

willing countries – remains unclear.

Vice-President Geraldo Ackmin urged ministers to agree to "integrated action plans" for transitioning away from fossil fuels. – AFP

## Tennessee judge blocks Memphis deployment

**NEW YORK:** A Tennessee state court judge temporarily blocked on Monday Republican Governor Bill Lee's deployment of National Guard troops to the city of Memphis, ruling that the use of troops was likely not legal under the state's militia law.

Chancellor Patricia Head Moskal of the Davidson County Chancery Court in Nashville said the militia law required Tennessee's General Assembly to call in the National Guard for public safety, unless the state faced a rebellion or invasion.

Her order blocks the governor from "continuing the activation and deployment of Tennessee National Guard personnel" pending further court proceedings.

National Guard troops began patrolling Memphis as part of a federal task force to combat crime after President Donald Trump requested the deployment in September.

State lawmakers and the mayor of Shelby County sued Lee to block the deployment, saying that the use of the troops for law enforcement violates the Tennessee constitution and state laws.

Memphis is one of several US cities where Trump has sent the National Guard departing from norms against deploying troops on US soil.

Trump has said that they are needed to suppress civil unrest, support immigration enforcement and fight crime.

Democrats have alleged the Republican president is abusing military powers meant for grave emergencies such as an invasion. – Reuters

## Vegemite a human right, says inmate

**SYDNEY:** A prison inmate argued he should be allowed to enjoy Vegemite toast topping as a basic human right.

Convicted murderer Andre McKechnie has sued the prisons commissioner in Victoria in a novel bid to eat the Australian condiment.

McKechnie argued that he had a right to eat Vegemite because it was "his culture as an Australian", according to court documents.

Vegemite has been banned inside Victoria's jails since 2006 over fears the yeast-laden spread could be used to brew makeshift alcohol known as "pruno" or "hooch".

Inmates can also smear sticky Vegemite paste across contraband to mask its smell from sniffer dogs, according to an official list of banned prison items.

McKechnie's complaint pointed to Victoria's human rights charter, which states no one should be denied the opportunity to "enjoy their culture".

Vegemite was first concocted in Melbourne in the early 1920s to address wartime shortages of British Marmite.

A Melbourne council in 2022 declared that the distinctive smell wafting out of a local Vegemite factory held "significant" heritage value.

An Australian aerospace company stashed a small jar of Vegemite in the nose cone of an orbital rocket test-launched earlier this year.

But the acquired taste of Vegemite is not to everyone's liking.

Vegemite was in 2018 featured at Sweden's Disgusting Food Museum, ranking alongside fermented herrings, monkey brains and maggot-infested cheese. – AFP

## Summers steps back from public role

**WASHINGTON:** Former US Treasury secretary Larry Summers (*pic*) said on Monday he is "stepping back" from public commitments after Congress released emails showing close communication between him and deceased sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

"I take full responsibility for my misguided decision to continue communicating with Mr Epstein," Summers said in a statement.

Summers, a former president of Harvard University, where he is a professor, told the university's student newspaper that the move was to allow him "to rebuild trust and repair relationships with the people closest to me".

The announcement came after the House Oversight Committee released thousands of files related to Epstein last week, including documents that showed personal correspondence between Summers and Epstein.

"I am deeply ashamed of my actions and

recognise the pain they have caused. I take full responsibility for my misguided decision to continue communicating with Mr Epstein," Summers told *The Crimson*.

"While continuing to fulfil my teaching obligations, I will be stepping back from public commitments as one part of my broader effort."

Summers, a Democrat, served as former president Bill Clinton's Treasury Secretary and former president Barack Obama's National Economic Council director.

He serves on the board of OpenAI and as a director of the Harvard Kennedy School's Mossavar-Rahmani Centre for Business and Government.



OpenAI and Harvard did not immediately respond to requests for comments. Summers also did not immediately respond.

The Epstein scandal has been a political thorn in Trump's side for months, partly because he amplified conspiracy theories about Epstein to his own supporters.

Many Trump voters believe Bondi and other Trump officials have covered up Epstein's ties to powerful figures and obscured details surrounding his death by suicide in a Manhattan jail in 2019.

The US House of Representatives will vote on forcing the release of investigative Epstein files after Trump, who had initially opposed the vote, called on fellow Republicans to support it. – AFP

**MANILA:** Palestinian Foreign Minister Varsen Aghabekian Shahin said yesterday the UN Security Council's adoption of a resolution endorsing President Donald Trump's plan to end the war in Gaza was a necessary first step on a long road towards peace.

The Security Council on Monday adopted the US-drafted resolution, which also authorises a multinational security force to be deployed to Gaza and imposes an international guardian mechanism for the territory ravaged by two years of war.

There were 13 votes in favour of the text with only Russia and China abstaining but no vetoes.

"The UN resolution is the first step in a long road towards peace. That step was needed because we could not embark on anything else before we had a ceasefire," Shahin told reporters in Manila.

Shahin said there were still other issues that needed to be addressed, including Palestinian self-determination and eventual Palestinian independence, and that the process for implementing Trump's plan must be governed by international law.

She said that although Trump's plan alludes to possible Palestinian statehood and only after the PA carries out reforms, that issue could be taken up later.

"As long as these elements are in there, we're happy with this first step," Shahin said.

Hamas, in a statement, reiterated that it will not disarm and argued that its fight against Israel is legitimate resistance, potentially pitting the group against the international force authorised by the resolution.

Hamas said the resolution fails to respect the "demands and rights" of the Palestinians.

"This resolution does not meet the level of our Palestinian people's political and humanitarian demands and rights," the group said in a statement.

The statement also decried the establishment of an international force whose "mission includes the disarmament" of Palestinian groups in Gaza.

"The resolution imposes an international trusteeship on the Gaza Strip, which our people, its forces, and its constituent groups reject," the statement continued.

The text of the resolution says member states can take part in the Trump-chaired Board of Peace envisioned as a transitional authority that would oversee reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza.

It also authorises the international stabilisation force, which would ensure a process of demilitarising Gaza, including by decommissioning weapons and destroying military infrastructure.

Mike Waltz, the US ambassador to the UN, said the resolution, which includes Trump's 20-point

# 'UN vote is first step towards peace'

➤ Long road to peace: Palestinian foreign minister

plan as an annex, "charts a possible pathway for Palestinian self-determination ... where rockets will give way to olive branches and there is a chance to agree on a political horizon."

The UN ambassadors of Russia and China complained that the resolution does not give the UN a clear role in the future of Gaza.

"In essence, the council is giving its blessing to a US initiative on the basis of Washington's promises, giving complete control over the Gaza Strip to the Board of Peace and the ISF (international stabilisation force), the modalities of which we know nothing about so far," Russian ambassador Vasily Nebenzya told the council following the vote.

The resolution has proven controversial in Israel because it references a future possibility of statehood for the Palestinians.



Palestinians buy bread from a distribution point in Khan Younis. – REUTERSPIC

The resolution's text says that "conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood" once the Palestinian Authority has carried out a reform programme and Gaza's redevelopment has advanced.

"The United States will establish a dialogue between Israel and the

Palestinians to agree on a political horizon for peaceful and prosperous coexistence," it says.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, under pressure from right-wing members of his government, said on Sunday that Israel remained opposed to a Palestinian state and pledged to demilitarise Gaza. – Reuters/AFP



Shahin speaks during a press conference with her Philippine counterpart Theresa Lazaro in Manila yesterday. – AFPIC

## Suspicious flights point to agenda, says South Africa

**JOHANNESBURG:** South Africa said on Monday the surprise arrival of 153 Palestinians on a plane last week indicated "a clear agenda to cleanse Palestinians" out of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The group landed in Johannesburg on a chartered flight on Thursday without departure stamps from Israel in their passports.

Reports said a shadowy

organisation named Al-Majd was involved in their travel from Gaza.

"We are suspicious, as the South African government, about the circumstances surrounding the arrival of the plane," Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola.

South African border police kept the group on the plane for 12 hours before President Cyril Ramaphosa allowed them entry on a standard

90-day visa exemption.

It emerged later that a first plane carrying 176 Palestinians had arrived on Oct 28, according to the local Gift of the Givers charity that is assisting the arrivals.

"We do not want any further flights to come our way because this is a clear agenda to cleanse out Palestinians out of Gaza and the West Bank and those areas, which

South Africa is against," Lamola said.

"It does look like it represents a broader agenda to remove Palestinians from Palestine into different parts of the world, and is a clearly orchestrated operation."

South Africa, which is set to host world leaders at the G20 summit this weekend, is seen as one of the strongest supporters of the Palestinian cause. – AFP

BRIEFS

### HUNGER CRISIS DEEPENS, UN REPORTS

**ROME:** The world is facing a deepening hunger crisis with resources falling far short of needs, the UN World Food Programme warned, citing sharp declines in humanitarian funding. In its 2026 Global Outlook, the Rome-based WFP said 318 million people were expected to face crisis levels of hunger or worse next year, more than double the number in 2019. But shrinking humanitarian funding means the WFP only plans to assist about 110 million of the most vulnerable people next year, at a cost of US\$13 billion (RM54 billion), the agency said. Forecasts suggest it may receive only about half that amount. The WFP said last month that it expected to receive 40% less funding year-on-year for this year, resulting in a projected budget of US\$6.4 billion, down from US\$10 billion last year. – Reuters

### SEIZED TANKER CREW SAFE, SAYS FIRM

**LONDON:** The crew of a tanker, *Talara*, are safe and the vessel is anchored off Bandar Abbas, its manager said on Monday, after Tehran said it seized the ship in open Gulf waters last week. The tanker's captain made contact with the vessel's technical manager on Sunday, Columbia Shipmanagement said. "Columbia Shipmanagement is working with regional partners to resolve the situation and secure the release of our crew," the manager said. Iran has periodically seized commercial vessels in Gulf waters, often citing maritime violations such as smuggling, technical infractions or legal disputes. *Talara* last reported its position on Friday, ship tracking data on the MarineTraffic platform showed on Monday. – Reuters

## Indonesia welcomes adoption of plan

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia welcomes the UN Security Council's adoption of a resolution endorsing President Donald Trump's plan to end the war in Gaza and establish an international stabilisation force, the Foreign Ministry said yesterday.

Its spokesperson Yvonne Mewengkang stressed the importance of every party's involvement in it, "especially the Palestinian Authority".

"The resolution prioritises conflict resolution and prolonged peace through the capacity building of the Palestinian authorities," she said. "Indonesia will always support an independent and sovereign Palestinian nation."

The Trump administration has been trying to persuade countries such as Indonesia and Egypt to contribute troops to the peacekeeping force, which will back the process of demilitarising Gaza by decommissioning weapons and destroying military infrastructure.

A long-standing advocate of the Palestinian cause, Indonesia is ready to deploy up to 20,000 troops, its Defence Ministry said last week, adding that they would focus on areas like health and infrastructure.

Yvonne did not provide any details about the peacekeeping troops but said the resolution focuses on peacekeeping through a UN-mandated international stabilisation force.

President Prabowo Subianto told the UN General Assembly in September that Indonesia was prepared to deploy 20,000 or more peacekeeping troops in Gaza if there was a UN resolution. – Reuters

# End pregnancy discrimination at work

## COMMENT

by Assoc Prof Dr Azizan Zainuddin

**E**VERY morning, Nur commutes nearly an hour to the office with her growing belly. Despite feeling physically exhausted, she strives to maintain her usual work performance.

"I have to appear strong because I don't want people to think I'm uncommitted or weak," she says with a weary smile. Yet, behind that smile lies the physical fatigue and emotional stress commonly experienced by pregnant women in the workplace.

More disheartening is that experiences like this are far from unusual. Many pregnant women face such situations, often overlooked or trivialised by society, as if their exhaustion and challenges are minor burdens they must bear alone.

Nur's situation is not an isolated case. In today's modern society, women have become a critical pillar of the national workforce. Yet, pregnancy, which should be celebrated as a life-giving gift, is sometimes still perceived as a burden by some employers.

The Women's Aid Organisation found that over 40% of working women experience discrimination during pregnancy. This raises the question: Do employers in Malaysia truly understand the needs and rights of pregnant women?

Globally, this issue is closely linked to Sustainable Development Goal Five: Gender Equality, which emphasises the importance of providing women with equal employment opportunities, protection during pregnancy and a safe, inclusive work environment.

When pregnant women continue to face



To build an inclusive and humane workplace, we need to shift the perception that pregnancy is a weakness. — AI-GENERATED PIC

discrimination or restrictions at work, it not only violates fundamental human rights but also undermines the country's efforts to achieve equitable and sustainable development for all.

### Challenges and policy gaps

For many women, pregnancy comes with a double burden of responsibility. In addition to maintaining work performance, they face significant physical and emotional challenges.

Some must stand for long periods, climb stairs daily or attend lengthy meetings without adequate breaks. Unfortunately, the stigma that pregnant women are "unproductive" or

"burdensome to operations" still exists.

Some are excluded from promotion opportunities and, in some cases, employment contracts are not renewed after disclosing their pregnancy.

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, women's labour force participation has remained around 55% to 56%, compared with 82.9% for men over the past few years.

Moreover, the fact that five million women are not in the workforce highlights a worrying trend, with little indication of improvement. The increasing number of women leaving their jobs after pregnancy, particularly in the private sector, points to a significant gap between policy and practice in the workplace.

The 2022 amendment to the Employment Act 1955 grants 98 days of maternity leave and prohibits employers from terminating contracts due to pregnancy.

In line with the International Labour Organisation's Maternity Protection Convention, Malaysia emphasises women's rights to work in a safe environment. However, in practice, these policies often exist only on paper.

Many women in contractual, part-time or informal employment remain insufficiently protected. They hesitate to speak up for fear of losing their jobs or being marginalised.

The existence of protective laws is meaningless if pregnancy is still viewed as a disruption to productivity in an organisation.

Pregnancy is not just about physical changes; it also involves emotional well-being. High work-related stress can affect both maternal and fetal health.

Studies show that women working in high-stress environments are at greater risk of prenatal depression or preterm birth.

Psychosocial support is crucial, whether

from supervisors, colleagues or employers. Pregnant women need rest spaces, flexible working hours and understanding that productivity is not solely measured by physical presence.

### Pregnancy-friendly work environments

It is time for organisations to reassess how they treat pregnant employees. Pregnancy-friendly practices go beyond providing maternity leave; they involve creating a work environment that values the well-being of both mother and child.

Some measures that can be considered include:

- ➔ Offering flexible working hours or remote work options during the final trimester.
- ➔ Providing lactation rooms and dedicated rest areas.
- ➔ Training supervisors to be more sensitive to the needs of pregnant employees.
- ➔ Integrating support for pregnant employees into corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Organisations that foster a culture of empathy not only gain more loyal employees but also enhance their corporate image.

To build a truly inclusive and humane workplace, we need to shift the perception that pregnancy is a weakness. Instead, it should be recognised as a natural part of life, vital for driving economic growth and national development.

Women should not have to choose between being mothers or outstanding professionals; they should be given the space to be both, without guilt or fear of marginalisation.

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“I’ve known Jeff for 15 years. Terrific guy. He’s a lot of fun to be with. It is even said that he likes beautiful women as much as I do, and many of them are on the younger side. No doubt about it – Jeffrey enjoys the social life,” President Donald Trump quoted in *New York Magazine* in 2002.

The latest development in the Jeffrey Epstein case is likely to see the release of new documents and emails, further intensifying the scrutiny of high-profile individuals alleged to be connected to Epstein and his paedophilic and sex trafficking activities.

The most prominent figure brought down to date by this long-running and still very much alive salacious scandal that shocked and titillated Americans as well as observers around the world is the former Prince Andrew of the British royal family. His brother King Charles finally acted in response to mounting public pressure following the posthumous publication of Virginia Giuffre’s memoir, in which she repeated her allegations of sexual abuse against Andrew, and the re-emergence of emails showing continued contact between Andrew and convicted sex offender Epstein even after Andrew claimed to have cut ties.

Opinion polls in Britain indicated overwhelming public support (around 90%) for Charles to take decisive action. There were also calls for parliamentary action, and protesters even heckled the King at a public event demanding answers about Andrew’s connections to Epstein.

Anti-monarchy campaign group Republic explored legal avenues for a private prosecution, highlighting a public desire for accountability. In response to the pressure, Charles initiated a formal process in late October, which removed all of his brother’s remaining titles, honours and privileges. It was a move which some supporters of the British royalty saw as necessary to head off further criticism that could doom the institution.

Andrew’s name first publicly appeared in the Epstein case in 2015,

# Will Trump become biggest Epstein case casualty?

when he was identified in US court papers as part of a civil lawsuit against Epstein.

In the lawsuit, one of Epstein’s accusers, Virginia Giuffre (then known as Virginia Roberts), claimed that she was forced to have sex with the prince on three occasions when she was a minor. Since then, his detractors and some of the media have spared no effort in putting Andrew’s past and current activities in the spotlight and to question his claim to innocence and any involvement in the Epstein scandal.

Andrew’s fall from grace – 10 years later – may be likened to his having to undergo death by a thousand cuts. It was not a single sudden scandal that destroyed his public life but rather a series of damaging, cumulative actions and consequences over an extended period.

Each “cut” represented a distinct event or consequence that progressively eroded his reputation, status and relationship with the royal family and the public, and ultimately brought him to a point of no return despite his vigorous claims of innocence and denial.

## Death by a thousand cuts

Will the next prominent figure to fall be the US president? The most recently released emails and correspondence from Epstein’s files include alleged statements made by Epstein, such as one suggesting that Trump “knew about the girls” involved in his sex-trafficking ring.

Another exchange alleged that Trump “spent hours” with one victim at Epstein’s residence. These snippets have given new energy to Trump’s detractors, especially from the Democrats.

It is noteworthy that Epstein has



*“The most recently released emails and correspondence from Epstein’s files include alleged statements made by Epstein, such as one suggesting that Trump ‘knew about the girls’ involved in his sex-trafficking ring.”*

been described by the judge who found him guilty in 2006 as being “the most infamous paedophile in American history”.

Critics of Trump – they are exceptionally wide-ranging and span the entire American political

spectrum, going back to even before his first presidency – so far have not been able to bring him down.

Earlier sex-related cases involving Trump have also seen him emerge relatively unscathed in his political standing. They include two ongoing court cases as well as public accusations by two dozen women accusing him of various acts of sexual misconduct since the 1970s. Trump has consistently denied all these allegations.

In the two cases in which he was found guilty – the E. Jean Carroll sexual abuse and defamation civil case and the Stormy Daniels Hush-Money case involving criminal conviction – he has mounted legal challenges that are awaiting final resolution.

The latest forthcoming release may well provide the greatest danger to Trump’s public image and credibility in several ways:

➔ It confirms or reinforces suggestions that Trump had knowledge of or was associated with Epstein’s conduct involving minors. This would directly undermine his repeated denials and could severely damage his public image and credibility. Even without proof of criminal wrongdoing, the confirmed history of a relationship and association with a convicted sex trafficker like Epstein has created a persistent political and moral liability. The Republicans have been able to live with this but may find the coming disclosures too much of a burden to the party’s political standing by continuing to support Trump.

➔ The administration’s efforts to oppose or delay the full release of the Department of Justice’s (DoJ) Epstein files are being framed by

opponents as a “cover-up” or “paedophile protection programme”. This has fuelled even more suspicion of multiple cover-ups, including Epstein’s suicide, and has drawn negative political attention, including among the ranks of the Republican faithful.

➔ The successful bipartisan effort to force a House vote on the file release demonstrates a significant point of vulnerability and potential fracture within the president’s own party on this issue. A successful vote will intensify scrutiny on the executive branch.

The biggest medium and long-term danger lies in the possibility that the fully released “Epstein files” could contain concrete information that substantiates the alleged claims or reveals other inappropriate conduct.

While the DoJ previously stated that their systematic review “did not expose any additional third-parties to allegations of illegal wrongdoing”, the political pressure for full transparency remains, which the Democrat Party will exploit fully in the period leading to the coming mid-term election.

In short, the immediate danger is a political fallout and damaged moral and character standing driven by the alleged contents of the emails and the controversy over transparency.

The deeper, unknown danger to the Trump presidency is what may be contained in the full set of DoJ files, which Congress is now poised to vote on releasing and which avid audiences, not only in the US but around the world, are agog over.

*Lim Teck Ghee’s Another Take is aimed at demystifying social orthodoxy.*  
Comments: [letters@thesundaily.com](mailto:letters@thesundaily.com)

## More than words: Power of multilingualism in Malaysian schools

LETTERS  
[letters@thesundaily.com](mailto:letters@thesundaily.com)

EVERY morning, when the school bell rings across Malaysia, classrooms come alive with a chorus of voices – some greeting each other with “Selamat pagi”, others with “Good morning” or “Vanakkam” and “Zao Shang Hao”. This is the sound of Malaysia’s greatest strength – our diversity in harmony.

In our schools, whether national or vernacular, we are given a rare and precious gift: the chance to learn and grow in more than one language.

For many students, this means mastering not just two but three languages – Bahasa Melayu, English and either Mandarin or Tamil.

It’s a system that doesn’t just teach us to communicate; it also teaches us to understand, connect and belong.

Each of our national languages plays a unique and powerful role in shaping who we are. Bahasa Melayu is the language of unity – the golden thread that ties together Malaysians of every race, culture and belief. It’s the

language we use to sing *Negaraku*, to celebrate our independence and to express our shared identity as one nation.

When we speak Bahasa Melayu, we remind ourselves that we are part of something bigger – a Malaysia that is diverse yet united.

English is the language of opportunity. It opens doors to higher education, global communication and international success. Through English, Malaysian students can access the world’s best ideas – from science to literature and from technology to art. But English is more than a school subject; it’s a bridge to the wider world, allowing us to dream, compete and collaborate on a global stage.

Mandarin, Tamil and other mother tongues are the languages of heritage. They carry the wisdom of our ancestors, the rhythm of our traditions and the beauty of our stories. When we speak our mother tongue, we keep our roots alive. It connects us to our families, communities and our cultural pride, reminding us where we come from as we move towards the future.

Being multilingual isn’t only about



Being multilingual isn’t only about knowing more words; it’s about seeing the world through more than one lens. – **MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN**

knowing more words; it’s about seeing the world through more than one lens.

When you learn a new science term in English and then explain it to your friend in Bahasa Melayu or Mandarin, you are not just translating; you are also deepening your understanding. You are training your brain to connect ideas in creative ways.

This is the secret advantage of

bilingual and trilingual students: they think differently. Studies show that multilingual learners are often better at problem-solving, multitasking and creative thinking. The mental flexibility that comes from juggling languages also makes it easier to learn new skills later in life.

In a world that is changing faster than ever, being able to think in multiple languages is not just

impressive; it is essential. Languages are living things; they grow only when you use them. Memorising grammar rules isn’t enough; the real magic happens when you speak, read, listen and write every day.

Here is how you can make the most of your multilingual journey:  
➔ **Speak boldly:** Don’t be afraid to mix languages in your conversations; it’s a natural part of learning. Just remember to switch to formal language in essays and presentations.

➔ **Read widely:** Explore books, articles and stories in different languages. Read a novel in English, a poem in Bahasa and a comic in Mandarin or Tamil. Every story adds something new to your thinking.

➔ **Write creatively:** Keep a language journal. Try writing your daily reflections in a different language each time. This helps improve your efficiency in the languages. Together, these languages don’t divide us; they define us. They make Malaysia not just multilingual but also multicultural, multitalented and multifaceted.

**Liong Kam Chong**  
Seremban

# Enhancing energy efficiency in Malaysia

## Private sector stepping up as key driver of progress

**KUALA LUMPUR:** As Malaysia accelerates its transition towards a low-carbon economy, the private sector is stepping up as a key driver of progress.

This commitment took centre stage at the 3rd Annual National Energy Efficiency Conference (NEEC), organised by the Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation (MGTC) and Business Sweden, in collaboration with industry partners ABB, Atlas Copco, Daikin, Schaeffler and SKF.

The event, held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, convened policymakers, industry leaders and technology experts to explore collaborative strategies to enhance energy efficiency across Malaysia's industrial and commercial sectors.

The conference builds on Budget 2026's renewed push for private sector participation in achieving the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR), underscoring the government's call for industry-driven innovation in sustainable growth.

The conference also touched on developments within the semiconductor industry, energy efficiency in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) and halal green industries; key areas driving the nation's competitiveness and commitment to sustainable industrial growth.

The event also marked the exchange of memorandum of understandings (MoUs) with SKF Malaysia, formalising its entry as the latest member of the NEEC network.

Together, these partnerships reflect an expanding ecosystem dedicated to advancing Malaysia's energy transition through shared expertise and cross-industry collaboration.

Recent developments show that Malaysia is already delivering measurable progress in energy efficiency.

The Malaysian government has achieved cumulative savings of 39,382 GWh, which is valued at RM10.5 billion.

In the first half of 2024 alone, the country delivered 5.82% electricity savings, which is equivalent to RM2.21 billion.

"Energy efficiency is one of the most practical and impactful tools we have for achieving net-zero ambitions. Our collective goal is to help industries move from compliance to competitiveness, ensuring that energy efficiency is seen as a strategic advantage that drives long-term growth," said Atlas Copco (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd general manager Khalid Shaikh.

These savings are achieved from the programmes such as minimum performance standards, energy audits and building energy index labelling.

In addition to that, the recent Budget 2026 has reinforced these commitments under NETR by introducing a RM150 million Energy Transition Fund.

This fund is a major solar project which includes the Large-Scale Solar (LSS 6) programme (nearly 2GW capacity) and strong targets such as 70% renewable energy capacity by 2050.

Reflecting this shift, Beckers Industrial Coatings, Nextgreen Global Berhad, Sandvik Equipment, PureCircle and Kawan Food Manufacturing were honoured as Energy Efficiency Champions, recognising their leadership in integrating sustainable technologies, optimising production processes and embedding efficiency into their business models.

"As industries digitise, predictive maintenance, condition monitoring and energy monitoring are becoming key enablers of both compliance and competitiveness. These technologies can both help cut waste and emissions and ensure that operations are future-ready," noted Schaeffler Malaysia managing director Kelvin Chong.

These initiatives demonstrate how policy,

technology and industrial leadership are forming a coalition that both advances Malaysia's decarbonisation goals and redefines competitiveness in a low-carbon economy.

The NEEC 2025 discussions made clear that Malaysia's next wave of energy efficiency will be driven by technology integration, not as an isolated innovation effort, but as a systemic shift in how industries operate.

Across sectors, the convergence of automation, AI and intelligent cooling systems is redefining operational standards, enabling companies to achieve both emissions reduction and productivity gains simultaneously.

At the core of this transformation is the recognition that energy efficiency is no longer a peripheral compliance measure, it is now a competitive imperative.

For industries, this means embedding efficiency directly into processes, machinery and decision-making frameworks, from motion technology to HVAC optimisation.

"At ABB, we believe three key forces will shape Malaysia's sustainable energy future, and energy efficiency is one of them. To turn ambition into action, collaboration is essential. No single organisation can tackle this challenge alone.

"By bringing together our strengths in electrification, automation, and digitalisation, we can build an ecosystem that drives sustainable industrial transformation, at scale and with lasting impact," said ABB Group senior vice president & Motion Business, Asia head R. Narayanan.

In manufacturing environments, digitalised motion and automation systems are increasingly being used to identify inefficiencies in real time, streamline energy use and extend equipment lifespan, creating compounding value for both sustainability and cost management.

Meanwhile, the building and industrial cooling segments are seeing parallel advances.

"Smart cooling systems play a critical role in reducing Malaysia's energy footprint. By

combining advanced HVAC technologies with intelligent controls, we can help buildings and industries achieve measurable energy savings," noted Daikin Malaysia senior manager (HOD), VRV & project sales Desmond Tay Yang Jiun.

For SKF Malaysia, the principles of circular economy and energy stewardship converge through its commitment to the NEEC.

"Through this collaboration, we aim to share best practices, drive innovation and deliver intelligent and clean solutions that accelerate sustainable industrial transformation. With every rotation we optimise, and every collaboration we nurture, we are fulfilling our commitment - Less Friction. More Progress," said SKF Malaysia services and engineering head Naqeeb Yusof.

Together, these advancements reflect a broader shift underway in Malaysia's industrial landscape where digitalisation, data and cross-sector collaboration are transforming energy efficiency into a foundation for long-term competitiveness and net-zero growth.

NEEC 2025 underscored a decisive shift in Malaysia's approach to decarbonisation, from policy formulation to coordinated, on-the-ground execution. With the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act (EECA) now in motion and the RM150 million Energy Transition Fund reinforcing Budget 2026, the conversation has moved beyond ambition to implementation.

"Malaysia's journey towards a low-carbon economy is a shared endeavour, and energy efficiency remains at the heart of that transformation. Through platforms like the National Energy Efficiency Conference, we see how strong public-private collaboration can translate ambition into measurable impact. Sweden is proud to support Malaysia in accelerating its green transition, fostering innovation, and building sustainable competitiveness across industries," said Ludvig Hermansson, Trade Commissioner, Business Sweden in Malaysia.

## Zurich and TRCRC renew rainforest restoration pact

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Zurich Malaysia has renewed its partnership with the Tropical Rainforest Conservation and Research Centre (TRCRC) for another year to continue supporting the Tropical Rainforest Living Collection (TRLC) Merisuli project in Sabah under the Zurich Cares initiative.

The collaboration, which began in 2022, focuses on large-scale forest restoration, biodiversity conservation and the protection of endangered species. Zurich Cares, the group's conservation and restoration initiative, promotes environmental stewardship, community resilience and responsible business practices.

Through the renewed partnership, Zurich Malaysia and TRCRC aim to restore more than 50ha of damaged forest, grow over 30,000 rare tree seedlings for replanting and work with local communities to safeguard and reintroduce vulnerable species. Most of the project's workforce is recruited from nearby villages, supporting local employment while keeping the effort community-driven.

Zurich Malaysia country CEO Junior Cho said protecting the environment is crucial for a sustainable future.

"The Zurich Cares initiative represents our proactive approach to addressing the urgent challenge of biodiversity loss, and we are proud to stand alongside TRCRC in this mission. Guided by our commitment to care for what matters, Zurich Malaysia wants to contribute to initiatives supporting local climate resilience," he said.

At the core of Zurich Cares' efforts has been the restoration of dipterocarp species, over 60% of which are threatened in Borneo. Their recovery is considered vital for rebuilding forest structure, enhancing carbon storage and providing critical wildlife habitats. Early progress has already been recorded, with the return of Borneo pygmy elephants, orangutans, hornbills, tarsiers and sun bears to the area.

Among the achievements of the Zurich Cares initiative over the past three years are the planting of 54,763 seedlings of fast-growing and dipterocarp species across the site and the addition of 1,000 seedlings under the 1 Pledge 1 Tree campaign.

The project has actively reforested 53.14ha, including 4.17ha of research planting plots, and is currently maintaining 34,335 seedlings of dipterocarp, non-dipterocarp and wild fruit species in the nursery.

It has also successfully nurtured 63 Rare, Threatened and Endangered (RTE) species at TRLC Merisuli, contributed 619 excess seedlings to other forest restoration programmes across Sabah, and placed 90ha under active silviculture maintenance to ensure long-term forest health. A seedling survival rate of 70% was recorded as of December 2023, while 37 RTE mother trees have been identified and tagged for future seed collection.

In addition, 12 new localities have been surveyed across Sabah for seed sourcing and biodiversity monitoring.

TRCRC executive director Dr Dzaeman Dzulkifli said restoring tropical rainforests is an



Erin Hwang, head, brand marketing and communications of Zurich Malaysia, Dzaeman, Teresa Wong, chief risk officer - general segment / head of sustainability risk of Zurich Malaysia and Zul Sham Zul Junaidee, brand specialist of Zurich Malaysia, at the partnership signing ceremony between Zurich Malaysia and TRCRC.

urgent yet complex endeavour.

"Many of the endangered tree species we work with face extremely low natural regeneration rates, making their survival dependent on science-based propagation and sustained long-term care. With Zurich Malaysia's continued support, we can scale up our restoration efforts and create the right

ecological conditions for these forests to thrive. This partnership ensures that nature not only recovers, but also flourishes for generations to come," he said.

The Zurich Cares initiative is expected to continue strengthening Malaysia's ecological resilience while serving as a refuge for biodiversity in the years to come.



## Asean's **neutrality** a platform for engaging with big powers

➤ Stance offers channel for trade, technology collaboration and investment with major economies, says Tengku Zafrul

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Asean's neutrality offers a rare, viable platform for trade, technology collaboration and investment with all major economic players, said Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz.

He said Asean's consistent engagement with both the United States and China, without aligning with any single strategic orbit, has preserved the policy space many regions lack.

"This deliberate posture preserves autonomy while enhancing Asean's economic appeal," he said during a talk on "Building Regional Strength Through Smarter Fiscal and Trade Policies" here yesterday.

Tengku Zafrul said that over the past year, Malaysia has had the honour of chairing Asean, during a period marked by geopolitical fragmentation and great power rivalry.

Despite these challenges, he said, Asean demonstrated resilience, cohesion and stability, reaffirming its role as a vital anchor of economic balance and strategic neutrality.

"Meanwhile, one key insight from Malaysia's Asean chairmanship is that the region's relevance has grown in step with intensifying global polarisation.

"As major powers recalibrate and supply chains realign around geopolitical shifts, Asean's balanced and forward-looking stance has become a valuable stabilising force," he added.

He said at the 47th Asean Summit, Malaysia, as part of Asean, also signed the upgraded Asean-China Free Trade Agreement 3.0, reinforcing the longstanding economic partnership with China.

Additionally, the Asean Trade in Goods Agreement (Atiga) Upgrade, concluded during Malaysia's Asean chairmanship, also marked a pivotal step towards deepening regional economic integration.

"In an era where resilience and agility increasingly determine competitiveness, the Atiga Upgrade lays the institutional foundation for this region to function as a more seamless, trusted single market, enhancing its appeal for investments.

"Indeed, in 2024, Asean defied global trends



Tengku Zafrul speaking during a talk on 'Building Regional Strength Through Smarter Fiscal and Trade Policies' yesterday. – **BERNAMAPIC**

with an 8.5% increase in foreign direct investment, reaching US\$228 billion (RM952 billion). With Atiga's upgrade, I am confident this momentum can be sustained," he said.

Meanwhile, for the Asean Digital Economy Framework Agreement (Defa), the Asean digital economy is projected to reach US\$1 trillion (RM4.16 trillion) by 2030.

With Defa, advanced under Malaysia's leadership, this is set to double to US\$2 trillion, he said.

On green transition and industrial decarbonisation, he said Asean has made progress on the Asean Power Grid that will revolutionise and create closer integration in the regional energy sector.

Tengku Zafrul also said the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) is a sovereign, rules-based mechanism that reinforces Malaysia's ability to sustain stable, predictable commercial ties with major economies, especially at a time when unilateral tariff actions are becoming the norm.

He said the ART inked with the US must therefore be viewed within this broader context of principled engagement with key trading partners.

"Nothing in the ART overrides Malaysian law, diminishes national sovereignty, or forces liberalisation beyond our chosen policy direction. All provisions are grounded in Malaysian laws, with red lines protected. The key is to secure a platform for continued

engagement, for resolving issues of common concern," he said.

Tengku Zafrul said, critically, the ART enhances trade predictability and anchors Malaysia within a global, rules-based framework.

It also provides certainty for exporters and strengthens the investment ecosystem.

"In today's landscape, where economic security increasingly shapes market access, the ART is a tool of strategic protection, not concession. With almost RM200 billion in exports in 2024, protected access and sustained competitiveness are non-negotiable," he added.

The minister also emphasised that the government is striving to keep the investment community informed throughout the ART negotiation process with the US.

"Thankfully, this has contributed to the positive growth momentum of our trade and investment inflows," he said.

From January to September 2025, Malaysia attracted RM285.2 billion in approved investments, marking a 13.2% year-on-year increase, Tengku Zafrul said.

He noted that foreign investments accounted for 52.9% (RM150.8 billion) in approved investments, while domestic investments contributed 47.1%, a solid reflection of both foreign and domestic investors' confidence in Malaysia's policy direction. – **Bernama**

## M'sia to champion Islamic fintech, climate-oriented sukuk: Fadillah

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia aspires to be the global benchmark for regulation, innovation and Islamic environmental, social and governance as well as a centre of excellence for Islamic financial technology and climate-oriented sukuk by 2040, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof.

He said the global financial landscape is evolving and Islamic finance is poised to lead a new frontier, with Malaysia's direction aligned with global megatrends.

Fadillah noted that Islamic finance will underpin Malaysia's climate architecture, enabling transition, green and blue sukuk, financing hydrogen, renewable energy, water security and food systems.

"Malaysia will also lead in technology-driven Islamic finance – from Islamic digital banks to artificial intelligence-enabled syariah advisory and blockchain-based sukuk platforms.

"We will modernise social finance digitising zakat, developing productive waqf, scaling micro-takaful and strengthening community resilience," he said during the opening of the 20th Kuala Lumpur Islamic Finance Forum 2025 (KLIF 2025) yesterday.

According to Fadillah, with the world's first tokenised cash waqf sukuk, Malaysia showcased that Islamic finance can be compassionate, innovative and inclusive.

"We lead in green finance through the Sustainable and Responsible Investment Sukuk and Bond Grant Scheme, covering 100% of eligible costs and aligned with the Asean Taxonomy," he said.

Additionally, the deputy prime minister emphasised that Islamic banking contributes 46.6% of total national financing and is on track to surpass 50% – making Malaysia the first country in the world where Islamic finance becomes the mainstream system.

"Islamic banking assets exceed US\$260 billion (RM1.08 trillion), and our Islamic capital market stands at RM2.63 trillion, representing 62% of the total market.

"Malaysia also remains the world's leading sukuk market, commanding between 40% and 50% of global issuances," he added.

Themed "Strengthening Economies, Advancing Resilience and Sustainability", the two-day forum beginning yesterday gathers more than 400 delegates from around the world to discuss the future of Islamic finance and investment opportunities.

KLIF 2025 will feature discussions ranging from regulatory innovation to sustainable and digital Islamic finance, highlighting the government's strong support for advancing Malaysia as a global leader in Islamic finance. – **Bernama**

## Matrade to lead export acceleration mission to strengthen trade with Cambodia

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) will lead an Export Acceleration Mission (EAM) to Cambodia from Nov 25 to 27, aimed at strengthening Malaysia's trade engagement with one of Asean's fastest-growing economies.

In a statement yesterday, Matrade said, the mission seeks to position Malaysian companies as reliable partners in meeting Cambodia's rising demand for

consumer and industrial goods.

The programme will feature networking sessions with key business associations including the Malaysian Business Chamber in Cambodia, Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Associations for SMEs in Cambodia and Young Entrepreneurs Association of Cambodia.

Matrade said participants will also take part in business meetings with potential importers and distributors, as

well as market briefings on trade regulations and emerging opportunities in high-growth sectors.

The mission will involve Malaysian exporters in high-potential product sectors, including fast-moving consumer goods, food and beverages, personal care products, detergents, agricultural products such as fertilisers and petroleum-based products.

These sectors have been identified as key drivers of Malaysia's export

potential and align closely with Cambodia's growing demand for quality consumer and industrial goods.

Matrade said the mission takes place at a strategic time as Cambodia's economy continues to grow, fuelling consumer demand for higher-quality products. Malaysia-Cambodia trade recorded strong growth, reaching US\$848.8 million (RM3.5 billion) for January-September 2025, a 35.3% increase over

the same period last year.

This upward trend has been driven by Cambodia's increasing demand for processed food and beverages, personal care products, and industrial supplies from Malaysia.

Malaysian exporters interested in exploring business opportunities in Cambodia may contact Matrade Ho Chi Minh City at hcmc@matrade.gov.my for market insights, business contacts, and trade updates.

# M'sian MSMEs upbeat on AI but significant gaps remain

➤ Xero survey shows local micro, small and medium enterprises lag in readiness, awareness and adoption

BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysian micro, small and medium enterprises remain optimistic about artificial intelligence (AI) but continue to face significant gaps in readiness, awareness and adoption, according to the Xero MSME AI Sentiment Survey report and white paper launched yesterday in collaboration with the Small and Medium Enterprises Association (Samenta).

The research, titled "Building a Future-Ready Economy: Examining AI Readiness and Adoption Among Malaysia's MSMEs", found that while business owners acknowledge AI's potential to drive efficiency and competitiveness, most remain in the early stages of adoption, with many unsure of the right tools, skills, or governance structures needed to implement the technology meaningfully.

Xero Asia managing director Koren Wines said the study aimed to understand how MSMEs perceive AI, the barriers they face and the potential role of cloud accounting and digital financial tools in accelerating adoption.

"There is a really large emphasis on what AI means for the future of work and how it can help businesses remain agile. But what we also found is that MSMEs want clearer guidance, better training and more support on how to adopt AI safely and effectively."

She added that the lack of data hygiene remains one of the biggest structural barriers. "AI is only as powerful as the data you feed into it. If the underlying financial records are inaccurate or inconsistent, the insights produced will be flawed. That's why the move to digital accounting platforms is such a critical first step."

Wines said awareness among Malaysian MSMEs is promising, but adoption is still slow. Many respondents are experimenting with basic AI tools such as chatbots or automated customer responses, but few are using AI for business-critical functions like forecasting, financial insights or workflow automation.

"What the survey tells us is that MSMEs recognise AI is no longer optional. But they do need more confidence, more examples relevant to their size and clearer pathways to start," she said.

During a panel discussion, Samenta digitalisation and AI committee member, Alain Lye said, that while many MSMEs are keen to explore AI, they often perceive it as expensive, complicated or suitable only for large corporations.

"A lot of SMEs still think AI is a luxury, or that adopting AI means hiring a team of data scientists. But the reality is that today's AI tools are becoming more accessible and affordable. The challenge is awareness, many SMEs don't know what solutions are available or how to begin integrating them," he said.

Lye added that the lack of standardised frameworks and government-backed training programmes contributes to the adoption gap. "MSMEs don't just need

financial incentives; they need knowledge. They need to understand what AI can do for a micro business, a retail shop, a contractor, a manufacturing SME. We have to move beyond slogans and show practical, real examples."

He pointed out that AI adoption for SMEs should be incremental rather than overwhelming. "It's not about automating everything at once. Start with simple functions like inventory management, customer follow-ups, or financial organisation. These small steps can generate immediate value."

One concern highlighted in the survey is the lack of confidence among MSMEs in handling data governance, cybersecurity and compliance. Many respondents admitted they were unsure how to protect sensitive data or assess the reliability of AI-generated insights.

Wines said this concern is valid and reinforces the need for clear industry guidance. "When SMEs don't know what's safe and what's not, they hesitate. This is where ecosystem partners, accountants, industry bodies and technology providers must work together to offer practical, trustworthy solutions."

She also emphasised that accountants are a key part of the ecosystem and as technologies evolve, their role becomes even more important.

"They help business owners interpret financial data, plan strategically and adopt new tools confidently."

Despite the challenges, both Xero and Samenta believe that Malaysia has strong potential to scale AI adoption quickly, given the government's push for digitalisation and the growing availability of cloud-based solutions for small businesses.



Lye (left) and Wines at the launch of the Xero MSME AI Sentiment Survey report and white paper yesterday.

## Glove sector outlook brightens as Top Glove leads renewed optimism

**PETALING JAYA:** The outlook for Malaysia's glove industry is turning brighter as Top Glove Corporation Bhd reported a strong fourth quarter ended Aug 31, 2025 (Q4'25) with net profit of RM38.6 million compared to a net loss of RM6.6 million year-on-year (YoY).

This makes up the company's full-year net profit of RM109.1 million for FY2025 compared to a loss of RM64.9 million YoY, driven by improving demand from the United States and early signs of price stabilisation.

In a statement yesterday, Top Glove said its exports to the US have continued to rise, now making up 38% of total sales compared with only 18% three quarters ago. The company expects double-digit sales volume growth in FY2026, supported by steady order replenishment and healthier pricing.

Top Glove was recently upgraded to an 'AA' rating by MSCI for environmental, social and governance performance.

Other local producers such as Hartalega Holdings Bhd and Kossan Rubber Industries Bhd have also been showing better numbers given the higher utilisation rates and inventories have returned to normal levels.

Analysts maintain positive views on the sector's leading names, pointing out that both sales volume and average selling prices (ASP) are gradually improving.

After several years of price pressure and oversupply, more disciplined competition among Chinese players, some of whom have begun raising their ASP slightly, suggests that the market is moving towards a more sustainable balance between demand and supply.

"The glove sector is gradually regaining stability as US demand picks up and excess capacity continues to ease. FY2026 is likely to mark the start of a more sustained recovery, supported by improving margins and better earnings visibility. Malaysian manufacturers remain competitively positioned through tighter cost control, enhanced ESG practices, and resilient global healthcare demand," said Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd research head Kenny Yee.

Despite near-term risks from potential price competition and tariff shifts, analysts view the medium-term outlook positively as the sector enters a consolidation phase. Lower input costs, with natural latex prices falling 14% and nitrile latex declining 10% quarter-on-quarter, are expected to further support profitability over the coming quarters.

Analysts forecast Top Glove's net profit to grow by 24% YoY to RM135 million in FY2026, with utilisation rates expected to exceed 70%. They have maintained an "Outperform" rating on the counter.

## PMW International eyes state-led projects in East Malaysia

BY HAYATUN RAZAK  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Infrastructure solutions provider PMW International Bhd is eyeing major state-led projects in East Malaysia including the Sarawak-Sabah Link Road (SSLR), the Miri-Marudi-Long Lama Road (MMLL Road), the Sarawak Coastal Road network and the Tanjung Embang deep-sea port to strengthen supply capacity and better serve East Malaysia's growing infrastructure demand.

Executive director and CEO Lee Hon Hwa pointed out that a significant portion of the national budget has been allocated for Sabah and Sarawak.

"And the projects that we are eyeing in Sarawak will be the SSLR, MMLL Road, Sarawak Coastal Road, as well as the upcoming Tanjung Embang, deep sea port as well as airport," he told a press conference after the company's listing yesterday.

Lee said PMW is currently in negotiations with several infrastructure and telecommunications firms to

extend their existing lines. "The order book stands at about RM130 million at the moment. From there, we can expand further," he said, adding that the group is positioning itself for mid-term industry growth.

He said the timeline for PMW's new 29-acre Tanjung Manis facility in Sarawak remains on track, with further updates to be provided in due course. Once completed, the plant will increase PMW's production capacity by 55.67%, making it the group's largest facility.

Lee noted a surge in demand for power distribution, driven by the increased electricity needs of data centres in Malaysia. "For telecommunications, with the upcoming second 5G network, there are a lot of connectivity requirements and many networks need to be upgraded," he said.

PMW's key clients include Tenaga Nasional Bhd-linked contractors involved in power distribution works, as well as telecommunications companies and tower operators that purchase monopoles and related

structures.

The group also serves construction and infrastructure contractors undertaking civil works and utility upgrades. In addition, PMW supplies local authorities with lighting poles and related products for public infrastructure projects.

PMW's margins are influenced by cement and steel prices, but said, it manages cost volatility through procurement planning and efficiency measures.

The company's shares opened flat at 34 sen on its first day of trading, matching its initial public offering (IPO) price. At the opening bell, a total of 13.85 million shares were traded.

The counter closed at 34.5 sen, half a sen above its IPO price.

Based on PMW's enlarged issued share capital of 892,051,816 shares and the IPO price of 34 sen per share, the company's total market capitalisation is about RM303.3 million.

The group raised RM60.66 million from its IPO, of which 77% will go towards constructing the Tanjung

Manis facility. Another 0.96% is allocated for new machinery and equipment to support its moulds and spun poles and piles operations, while the remainder will be used for working capital and listing expenses.

PMW Group is principally involved in the design, manufacturing, and sale of prestressed spun concrete poles, piles, and related concrete products such as decorative poles, monopoles, and square piles.

The group also manufactures moulds, machinery, metal products and lighting products through its subsidiaries. Its products serve the power transmission and distribution, telecommunications, infrastructure, lighting and construction industries in Malaysia and abroad.

The group operates multiple manufacturing facilities in Perak and Sabah and exports to regional and international markets.

KAF Investment Bank is the principal adviser, sponsor, sole underwriter and sole placement agent for the IPO.

**KUALA LUMPUR:** As Asean's digital economy races towards a projected value of US\$1 trillion (RM4.1 trillion) by 2030 – and potentially double that with the Asean Digital Economy Framework Agreement – AI's transformative potential risks being compromised by a lax cybersecurity approach.

IBM Asean general manager and technology leader Catherine Lian said, "Our region has witnessed a sharp rise in cyber threats, with attacks rising in scale and sophistication."

She added Singapore's latest cyber landscape shows phishing and ransomware as dominant threats and a sharp uptick in infected systems, while Malaysia ranked among the top in Southeast Asia for web-based threats last year.

The rapid adoption of AI is introducing new vulnerabilities. 66% of organisations expect this to have the most significant impact on cybersecurity in the year to come, according to Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2025. However, only 37% of these organisations have processes to assess the security of AI tools before deployment, revealing the gap between rapid AI implementation without necessary cybersecurity safeguards and the recognition of AI-induced risks.

"As enterprises deploy AI at scale, attackers are evolving their tactics by exploiting vulnerabilities in AI models, targeting proprietary data, and leveraging phishing campaigns to infiltrate systems," said Lian,

# Charting a path for **safe AI adoption** in Asean

➤ With cyber threats climbing, companies across the region face higher financial and operational danger

adding that IBM's 2025 X-Force Threat Intelligence Index revealed that 84% of phishing emails now deliver infostealers, and 30% of breaches stem from abuse of valid accounts.

The economists argue for action. At US\$4.44 million on average per breach and a world-leading 34% of global cybersecurity incidents happening to Asian enterprises, the stakes have never been higher.

Encouragingly, Lian said, governments are acting: the Asean Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy (2021–2025) advances information-sharing and joint readiness, while Singapore's Cybersecurity Act and

Malaysia's National Cyber Security Agency are designed to strengthen enforcement and resilience.

While policy-level initiatives provide the framework and impetus, it is AI itself which presents a powerful opportunity to strengthen our cyber defences. Today's mature AI algorithms can contextualise vast volumes of data – from raw signals to behavioural patterns – enabling security teams to detect threats faster and respond with precision. At IBM, we're pioneering generative AI use cases that not only enhance threat detection but also automate response workflows, freeing up valuable time and improving overall resilience.

Lian said from their extensive work and expertise in securing their clients' cyber signatures, here is a pragmatic playbook for Asean businesses to consider:

➔ **Secure-by-design AI:** Treat AI systems (models, data, prompts, agents) as critical assets – inventory them, restrict access, monitor usage, and red-team continuously.

➔ **Identity-first protection:** Roll out phishing resistant authentication, close authentication gaps, and monitor for infostealers and credential abuse across endpoints and cloud.

➔ **Automate the security operations centre:** Use mature AI plus gen AI to accelerate investigations, cut alert fatigue, and keep cybersecurity professionals in the loop and in charge.

➔ **Invest in skills, jointly:** Expand public-private talent programmes and regional information-sharing under Asean frameworks.

At IBM, she said, they believe the future of cybersecurity lies in the fusion of mature AI, generative innovation, and automation – empowering security teams to stay ahead of threats, protect critical assets, and build trust in a digital-first world.

"As Asean's digital economy scales new heights, let's ensure our cybersecurity posture rises with it. In the race to harness AI, security isn't an afterthought; it's the foundation," she added.

## Firefly begins KLIA–Krahi daily jet service

**SELANGOR:** Firefly, a subsidiary of Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG), has commenced its direct daily jet service to Krahi, Thailand from Kuala Lumpur International Airport Terminal 1.

The inaugural flight FY3610 departed KLIA on Monday commemorating the start of Firefly's latest international expansion.

The event was attended by senior MAG leaders, including Firefly chief operating officer Captain Hamdan Che Ismail, and MAG chief commercial officer of Airline Business Dersensih Aresandiran.

Hamdan said, "This new direct service from Kuala Lumpur underscores Firefly's strong commitment to boosting our footprint across Asia and to enhancing regional connectivity for travellers. It represents another important step in widening our network and making key destinations more accessible. More importantly, this expansion enables passengers from our sister airline, Malaysia Airlines, to seamlessly connect from major international hubs directly into Krahi, giving them a smoother journey and further elevating the overall travel experience."

The inaugural flight received strong public support, recording an impressive load factor of 96%. This turnout reflects the solid demand for the new route and the positive response from travellers eager for more convenient connectivity.

Firefly said it remains committed to enhancing air connectivity both within Malaysia and across the wider region. The airline noted that its growing jet operations from KLIA, combined with its established turboprop network from Subang, collectively strengthen MAG's aspiration to offer a comprehensive, accessible, and well-connected air travel ecosystem for all passengers. These complementary networks ensure greater reach, improved convenience, and more seamless travel options for travellers across multiple markets.

## Engie and Sunway expand district cooling collaboration

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Engie, a global leader in low-carbon energy and services, and Sunway Property announced the expansion of the Sunway Square district cooling system partnership through their joint venture Engie-Sunway DCS Sdn Bhd, to serve Sunway education's facilities, including Sunway University and Sunway College campuses.

The expansion builds upon the first district cooling system (DCS) launched in June 2025 to supply chilled water to the Sunway Square – a RM2 billion mixed-use development featuring Grade A offices, retail, a performing arts centre and a university block. With Sunway Square Corporate Towers now completed and tenants

progressively moving in, the retail component is slated to open in December 2025, while the performing arts centre opens in 2026.

Scheduled to be completed in September 2026, the expanded DCS network connects up to 3,000 refrigeration tonnes (RT) of cooling capacity to serve eight SEG buildings, including the newly constructed Engineering Annex, Faculty of Engineering & Technology and Graduate Centre. It will meet up to 60% of the campuses' peak cooling needs and approximately 75% of their annual cooling demand, cutting carbon emissions by 29%, equivalent to more than 48,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> avoided over the 24-

year contract period.

This initiative supports Malaysia's national target to cut greenhouse emissions by 45% by 2030 under the Paris Agreement.

Engie managing director for Southeast Asia Jacques Boonen said, "This expansion marks another step forward in our partnership with Sunway Property to shape the next generation of sustainable cities. It shows that sustainability and growth can go hand-in-hand. What we're building with Sunway Property goes beyond infrastructure – it's a model for how advanced cooling solutions can power Malaysia's low-carbon transition and inspire similar developments across the region."

Meanwhile, Sunway Property (central and northern region) CEO Chong Sau Min said that as a master community developer, they see sustainability as central to how they plan and grow their townships.

"The success of our first DCS at Sunway Square marked a major milestone, and this expansion builds on that achievement to scale low-carbon infrastructure across Sunway City Kuala Lumpur," he said, adding that together with Engie, they are integrating advanced energy solutions that strengthen their ecosystem and move them closer towards creating a smarter, more sustainable city for generations to come.

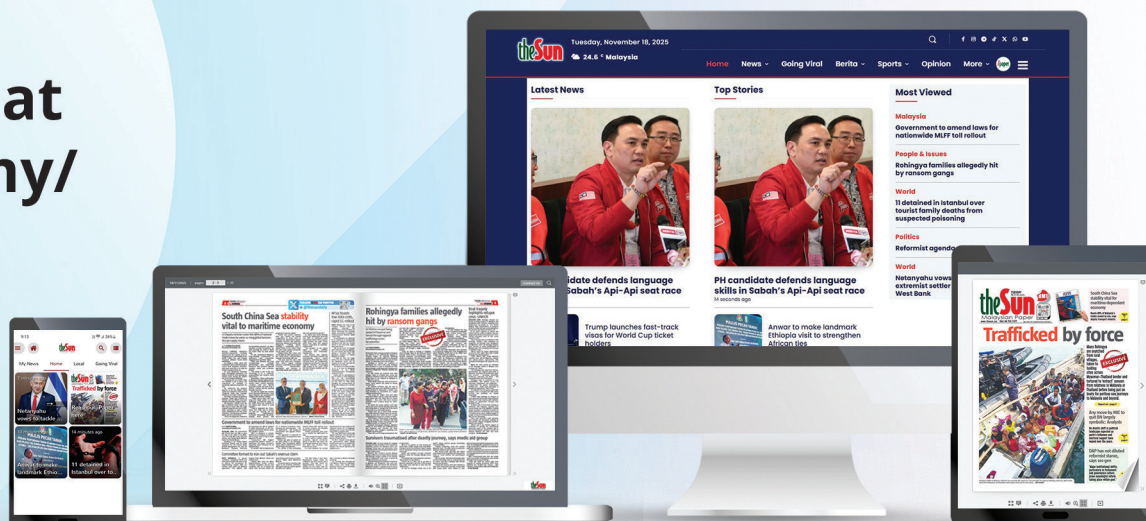
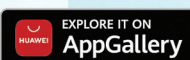
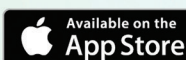


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# Mida: RM285.2b approved investments in nine months

Services sector accounts for 65.9% of total for January-to-September period

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia has attracted RM285.2 billion in approved investments from January to September 2025 (9M 2025), a 13.2% year-on-year (y-o-y) increase against the same period in 2024.

In a statement yesterday, the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida) said the strong performance was achieved despite global headwinds, including geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and tighter monetary conditions, highlighting Malaysia's continued appeal as an investment destination.

It said the services sector accounted for the largest share of investments at RM187.9 billion (65.9%), followed by manufacturing at RM93.8 billion (32.9%) and the primary sector at RM3.5 billion (1.2%).

It added that 4,874 projects were approved in the manufacturing, services and primary sectors, which are expected to create 152,766 new jobs, reflecting the scale and sectoral breadth of investors' interest in Malaysia's economy.

Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz described the performance as proof that Malaysia's economic strategy is working, noting that while global capital flows are contracting elsewhere, Malaysia has continued to attract quality investments at scale.

"This reflects the confidence investors have in our political stability and economic vision. When global investors look at Southeast Asia, they are increasingly choosing Malaysia. We are not just competing within Asean - we are setting the benchmark.

"Our focused execution of key missions under the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 is attracting investments, while delivering jobs and upskilling opportunities to power up our transition towards a high-value, knowledge-based economy," he said.

Meanwhile, Mida said, foreign invest-

ments (FI) surged 47.5% y-o-y, with gains across three sectors - services (122.0%), manufacturing (9.2%) and primary industries (56.6%), reflecting Malaysia's competitive fundamentals and the industrial clusters being developed under the New Industrial Master Plan 2030.

It said Singapore accounted for the largest share of FI at RM52.7 billion, followed by China (RM35.8 billion), the United States (RM11.3 billion), the British Virgin Islands (RM6.6 billion) and Japan (RM4.8 billion).

Johor saw the highest approved investments (RM91.1 billion), followed by Selangor (RM51.9 billion), Kuala Lumpur (RM45.9 billion), Penang (RM23.7 billion) and Kedah (RM17.5 billion).

"Johor's dominance is largely attributed to the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) and its proximity to one of Asia's most advanced economies," said Mida.

Meanwhile, Selangor and Kuala Lumpur continue to benefit from strong infrastructure and their role as Malaysia's commercial and financial hub.

Penang's strength lies in its mature electronics ecosystem, and Kedah is emerging as a beneficiary of northern corridor development initiatives, it said.

Mida said focus sectors under the NIA framework attracted RM137.9 billion, representing 48.4% of total approved investments.

It said these 676 projects are expected to generate 49,488 jobs, demonstrating alignment between investment strategy and national development objectives.

"Projects under the purview of the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (Miti) and Mida accounted for RM159.1 billion, or 55.8%, which includes 1,838 projects which are projected to create 75,068 jobs," it said.

From January to September 2025, Miti and Mida undertook nine missions, including five trade and investment missions and four official visits led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, that covered the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Switzerland, India, Russia, Saudi

Arabia, Singapore, the US, Italy, France, China and the Netherlands.

"As at Nov 9, 2025, Mida is facilitating 192 potential projects valued at RM39.0 billion. The services sector leads with 119 projects worth RM24.4 billion, while manufacturing accounts for 73 projects valued at RM14.6 billion.

"Mida is also in discussions regarding an additional RM39.4 billion in high-impact investment leads - signalling sustained investor interest and confidence in Malaysia's pro-business policies and long-term economic direction," it added.

Mida CEO Datuk Sikh Shamsul Ibrahim Sikh Abdul Majid said the strong pipeline projects and investment leads reflect a shift in how investors view Malaysia.

"We are no longer just an option in investors' diversification strategies—we are increasingly the preferred choice.

"What distinguishes this momentum is the quality of investments we are securing: technology-driven projects in digital infrastructure and advanced manufacturing that position Malaysia deeper into regional supply chains," he said.

He added that the RM39.0 billion pipeline currently being facilitated, along with another RM39.4 billion in advanced discussions, demonstrates that investor confidence remains robust despite external challenges.

Mida said that between 2021 and September 2025, the National Committee on Investment approved 4,378 manufacturing projects, of which 85% (3,724) have been implemented, 12% remain in the planning phase, and three per cent were not implemented due to changes in investors' commercial direction.

Implementation rates remain strong, with over 90% of manufacturing projects approved from 2021-2024 already implemented.

Meanwhile, 87.2% of projects approved in 2024 and 58.7% of those approved between January and September 2025 are progressing, a commendable rate, given their recent approval and the average lead time of 18 to 24 months typical for such developments, added Mida. - Bernama



## Malayan Flour Mills Q3 net profit surges fourfold to RM35.8 million

**PETALING JAYA:** Staple foods producer Malayan Flour Mills Bhd's (MFM) net profit for the third quarter ended Sept 30, 2025 (Q3'25) surged fourfold to RM35.8 million compared to RM7.3 million in the previous corresponding quarter, attributed largely to stronger results from the flour and grain trading (FGT) segment in Malaysia and Vietnam and the poultry integration (PI) business.

For Q3'25, the FGT segment, together with the aquafeed business, contributed a profit after tax of RM39.2 million, an increase of 68.2% compared to RM23.3 million in the previous year. The growth was achieved despite lower revenue of RM773.1 million, compared to RM799.2 million in the prior year. The better profitability was driven by higher sales volume and improved contribution margins, supported by lower wheat prices.

PT Bungasari, MFM's 30%-owned joint venture in Indonesia, returned to profitability, benefiting from higher flour sales volumes and better contribution margins. PT Bungasari recorded a profit after tax of RM3.4 million during the quarter, compared to a loss after tax of RM34.3 million a year ago. Consequently, the group's share of profit amounted to RM1 million in Q3'25, versus a share of loss of RM10.3 million in Q3'24.

Meanwhile, the PI segment, operated through a joint venture with Tyson Foods, posted an improved performance in Q3'25, with profit after tax of RM3.9 million from a loss after tax of RM5.2 million in the previous corresponding period. The group's share of profit from its 51% stake stood at RM2 million, compared to a share of loss of RM2.7 million in Q3'24.

Executive deputy chairman cum managing director Teh Wee Chye said the flour milling business will continue to sustain earnings, while the poultry integration business is gradually normalising as market demand stabilises.

For the nine months ended Sept 30, 2025 (9M25), MFM posted 51.3% higher net profit of RM96.9 million from RM64.1 million previously, while group revenue largely maintained at RM2.4 billion versus RM2.3 billion a year ago.

MFM is not declaring a dividend for the quarter under review; however, the group had earlier paid an interim dividend of 1.5 sen per share on Sept 25 amounting to RM18.6 million in respect of the financial year ending Dec 31, 2025.

## FeedMe raises US\$5m to accelerate restaurant automation across SE Asia



FeedMe chief technology officer King Wei Lo (left) and Tan.

**PETALING JAYA** FeedMe, a Malaysia-based restaurant software platform, yesterday announced a US\$5 million (RM20.8 million) funding round led by Integra Partners, with participation from Cento Ventures.

Southeast Asia's restaurant sector remains constrained by outdated, disjointed point solutions that create operational silos, slow decision-making, and drive up costs. Rising labour expenses and high failure rates further intensify the need for automation, inventory optimisation, and data-driven decision-making to protect margins and improve survival.

FeedMe said they address these challenges with an all-in-one operating system that unifies POS (point of sale), delivery integrations, e-invoicing, QR ordering, queue management, payment and financial products, accounting, kitchen display systems, HRM, inventory, AI operation tools and CRM.

Purpose-built for F&B, the FeedMe platform integrates both front- and back-of-house operations on a single stack, creating a

seamless ecosystem that powers every part of a restaurant business.

"F&B operators want to focus on great food and guest experience - not on stitching together fragmented tools," said FeedMe co-founder and CE, Squall Tan, who added that this funding accelerates their mission to become the Toast (NYSE: TOST) of Apac, embedding AI across the stack to help operators forecast demand, optimise inventory and run smarter across every outlet and channel.

The round, led by Integra Partners, comes on the back of strong growth: FeedMe now serves 11,000 merchants across Southeast Asia. It registered a revenue growth of more than 10x since 2021.

FeedMe is the first Malaysian startup selected for the inaugural Google AI Academy in Asia Pacific, a recognition of its AI-powered operating system designed to simplify, automate, and transform restaurant workflow.

FeedMe already counts leading brands such as ZUS Coffee, Christine's Bakery, Salad Atelier, Hock Kee Kopitiam as customers, providing a

strong base for regional expansion.

"FeedMe's unified platform, rapid product velocity, and traction with regional chains position it as the next-generation leader in restaurant digitalisation," said Jennifer Ho, partner at Integra. "We're excited to support the team as they scale payments, AI, and financial services to thousands more merchants."

Boon Ping Chua, partner at Cento Ventures, said: "FeedMe's specialist focus on restaurants, coupled with its integrated payments and data-driven product roadmap, positions it to become the category-defining operating system for the region. We are proud to support Squall and the team as they scale a product-led, capital-efficient business across Southeast Asia and beyond."

The new capital will be used strategically to accelerate FeedMe's expansion into the Thai market, scale its engineering capacity to further enhance its AI-driven solutions, and to launch financial services that would improve access to payments and lending for merchants.

# US biggest recipient of Chinese loans, study shows

➤ AidData finds Beijing's lending to wealthy countries focuses on critical infrastructure, minerals and high tech

**HONG KONG:** The United States is the biggest recipient of China's lending activities globally, according to a study which tracked Beijing's credit activities and found it is increasingly lending to higher-income countries over developing countries.

The report, published yesterday by AidData, a research lab at US university William & Mary, said China's lending and grant giving totalled US\$2.2 trillion (RM9.1 trillion) across 200 countries in every region of the world from 2000 to 2023. China has long been seen as a creditor to developing countries through its Belt and Road initiative, but is shifting toward lending to advanced economies – backing strategic infrastructure and high-tech supply chains in areas such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence and clean energy.

Beijing's portfolio size is two-to-four times larger than previous estimates suggest, AidData said, adding that China remains the world's largest official creditor.

More than three-quarters of China's overseas lending operations now support projects and activities in upper-middle-income countries and high-income countries.

"Much of the lending to wealthy countries is focused on critical infrastructure, critical minerals and the acquisition of high-tech assets like semiconductor companies," said lead author Brad Parks, AidData's executive director.

The United States received the most official sector credit from China, more than US\$200 billion for nearly 2,500 projects and activities, the report said.

Chinese state-owned entities are "active in

every corner and sector of the US", bankrolling the construction of LNG projects in Texas and Louisiana, data centres in Northern Virginia, terminals at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport and Los Angeles International Airport, the Matterhorn Express Natural Gas pipeline and the Dakota Access Oil pipeline, AidData said.

Beijing has financed the acquisition of high-tech companies, while Chinese state-owned creditors have provided credit facilities for many Fortune 500 companies including Amazon, AT&T, Verizon, Tesla, General Motors, Ford, Boeing and Disney, the report said.

The share of lending to low and lower-middle income countries fell to 12% in 2023 from 88% in 2000. Beijing has also cut lending for infrastructure projects in the "Global South", under its Belt and Road Initiative.

At the same time it has ramped up its share that supports middle-income and high-income countries to 76% in 2023 from 24% in 2000. The United Kingdom for instance received US\$60 billion, while the European Union got US\$161 billion. – Reuters

## Indian earnings turn corner as cooling inflation, tax cuts lift purchasing power

**BENGALURU:** India's corporate earnings are staging their strongest recovery in over a year, with brokerages turning upbeat on profit growth for the second half as they expect a broader rebound in consumption.

Cooling inflation, massive tax cuts on consumer goods and monetary policy support are helping revive overall demand, while early festive-season data points to a pick-up in discretionary purchases.

Those trends, along with stable tax collections and firmer credit growth, have kept Indian markets grinding higher in recent weeks and given companies a clearer runway heading into the second half of the fiscal year.

"Overall, we anticipate accelerated double-digit growth in the second half of fiscal year 2026 and in fiscal year 2027," said JPMorgan's Rajiv Batra and Rushit Mehta.

India's retail inflation slumped to a record low of 0.25% in October, driven by sharp fall in food prices and tax cuts on consumer goods, setting the stage for a rate cut in December.

Profit growth for BSE500 companies accelerated to 16.6% in the September quarter, up from 10.7% in June and a small contraction a year earlier, according to Emkay Global.

Oil marketing companies, telecom, metals, technology, non-bank lenders, cement and capital goods drove earnings, while autos, weighed down by Tata Motors, and large banks tempered aggregate performance.

Five heavyweights – Bharti Airtel, Tata Steel, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and TCS – accounted for most Nifty 50 profit growth, Motilal Oswal's analysis of quarterly results showed.

For MSCI India constituents, revenue and profit rose 8% and 9% year-on-year, with nearly half beating estimates, signaling widening breadth, JPMorgan's Rajiv Batra and Rushit Mehta said.

The Nifty 50 trades just 1% below its record high, supported by GST cuts, improving earnings visibility and valuations holding near 21.2x forward P/E.

About 40% of Nifty companies beat estimates and 28% missed expectations in the second quarter, JM Financial said.

Boosted by improved earnings, the mid-caps hit a record on Nov. 17, while small-caps lagged 7% below their peak, amid higher earnings misses.

Jefferies said early festive demand pushed revenue growth of companies under its coverage to a 10-quarter high, while lending financials showed a clear rebound. – Reuters



### SIZZLING DEBUT

... A box of a Pinkfong baby shark family melody pad' on display at a bookstore in Seoul. Shares of South Korean entertainment firm The Pinkfong Company, producer of the popular children's song Baby Shark, surged more than 60% in their market debut yesterday. Shares rose to as high as 61,500 won (RM1,752) each, against its initial public offering price of 38,000 won a share. The company priced its IPO at the top of its target range, raising 76 billion won. –REUTERS/AFPIC

## Tokyo and Seoul lead Asia stocks selloff

**HONG KONG:** Tokyo and Seoul led Asian equity losses yesterday, while bitcoin extended its latest swoon as investors grow increasingly worried about frothy tech valuations, with focus on earnings this week from artificial intelligence (AI) chip titan Nvidia.

Building anxiety that this year's record rally linked to all things AI has made some traders question whether the billions spent on the industry might not see the big returns as soon as hoped.

Compounding the negativity are concerns that the Federal Reserve will decide against a third-straight interest rate cut next month, as stubborn inflation plays up against a weakening jobs market.

The rally this year has been driven by the fears of missing out on the AI bandwagon and bets on US borrowing costs coming down.

That has put two major events this week well in the spotlight.

Today sees Nvidia – at the forefront of the AI

push with its top-end chips – release its latest earnings report, which will be pored over for an idea about the outlook for the sector.

Reports from retailers Home Depot, Target and Walmart will also give an insight into consumer sentiment.

Investors have become sensitive to any negative news surrounding the AI universe, and were given a jolt this week when it emerged that tech billionaire Peter Thiel's hedge fund had offloaded all its Nvidia stake, which Bloomberg valued at about US\$100 million (RM417 million).

Tomorrow is expected to see the release of the US September jobs report after delays due to the government shutdown. The data will provide a fresh snapshot of the world's number one economy and give an idea about the chances of another rate cut.

After a day deep in the red on Wall Street, Asia also struggled with Tokyo and Seoul – which have enjoyed hitting numerous records

this year – at the forefront of the selling.

Tokyo tumbled more than 3%, with investors nervously looking at Japanese bond markets as Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi prepares to unveil an economic stimulus package.

The yen slipped to around 155.38 per dollar, its weakest since January, amid fading expectations for more Bank of Japan interest rate hikes. The unit's retreat has also raised the possibility of officials intervening to provide support.

Seoul also tanked more than 3%, having enjoyed a spectacular rally of more than 60% so far this year led by chip titans Samsung and SK hynix, which were both hammered yesterday.

Taipei was another casualty, shedding more than 2% as market heavyweight chip firm TSMC suffered selling pressure.

Hong Kong and Sydney each lost around 2%, while Shanghai, Singapore, Wellington, Mumbai and Bangkok were well down. – AFP

## Paint maker AkzoNobel to buy Axalta Coating, creating US\$25b giant

**AMSTERDAM:** Dulux paint maker AkzoNobel said yesterday that it plans to acquire paintmaker Axalta Coating Systems in a deal that will create a combined company with an enterprise value of US\$25 billion (RM104.4 billion).

AkzoNobel shareholders are expected to own 55% of the new group and Axalta investors 45%, initially dual-listed in Amsterdam and New York before moving to a single NYSE listing, and maintaining dual headquarters in Amsterdam and Philadelphia.

The combined company will be led by current AkzoNobel chief executive Greg Poux-Guillaume as CEO.

"This merger will allow us to accelerate our growth ambitions by bringing together highly complementary technologies," AkzoNobel CEO Greg Poux-Guillaume said in a statement.

The new company expects annual revenues of US\$17 billion.

Completion of the merger is expected to close late 2026 to early 2027. – Reuters



# AI adds fresh logic to the silicon wheel

**HONG KONG:** One of the biggest surprises of the artificial intelligence (AI) boom is that everyone wants to be a chipmaker. For decades, tech companies outsourced the development of semiconductors to specialists like Nvidia because it was cheaper and more efficient. The rise of AI has changed that calculation: giants like Alphabet, Amazon.com, Microsoft, and Meta Platforms, are all stepping up their in-house silicon efforts. There is some logic to reinventing the wheel.

Apple blazed a trail back in 2010 when it launched the iPhone 4 containing its own silicon. At the time, the handset maker was an outlier. But the US\$4.6 trillion (RM19.1 trillion) Nvidia's dominance in developing the cutting-edge graphics processor units (GPUs) vital to training AI models has forced an industry-wide rethink.

Tech tycoons are nervous about relying on a single supplier for such a critical component. Nvidia's near-monopoly gives it enormous pricing power, too. Its data centre division is forecast to earn a 74% gross profit margin on US\$187 billion of sales in the year to January 2026, per Visible Alpha.

The AI arms race also requires ever-larger quantities of computing power. Despite Nvidia's rapid advances, the cost of training frontier AI models has grown 2.4 times annually since 2016, one study found last year. If that growth continues it

could cost more than US\$1 billion to train the largest models by 2027, adding extra impetus for companies to find cheaper hardware.

That is why the world's largest cloud computing suppliers – Alphabet, Amazon, and Microsoft – as well as Facebook owner Meta have been developing their own custom processors, known as application-specific integrated circuits (ASICs). These semiconductors are designed for a single purpose, differentiating them from off-the-shelf offerings from Nvidia or Advanced Micro Devices.

Alphabet-owned Google, for example, developed its Tensor Processing Units (TPU) over a decade ago for a speech-to-text function. Today Google deploys TPUs for training AI models as well as responding to queries from users – a process known as inferring. Microsoft, Amazon and Meta have followed suit. Last month, a Meta executive confirmed plans to buy chip startup Rivos to bolster the group's in-house capabilities.

One benefit of the do-it-yourself drive is that it gives companies greater control over hardware which can then be optimised and tailored for their particular cloud computing platforms and AI algorithms. Microsoft argues its “silicon to service” strategy of customising a data centre from top to bottom – including software, servers, racks and cooling systems – can help boost performance and efficiency for users

of its Azure cloud service.

Another advantage is that it is relatively easy to “make” a custom chip. That's because companies leave the challenge of actually printing the semiconductors onto silicon wafers to suppliers like US\$1.6 trillion Broadcom and smaller peers like Marvell Technology and MediaTek. These companies help design and engineer the processors, work with contract-chipmakers like Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing procure memory components and more. The AI ASIC market is set to grow as much as 55% annually to reach US\$60 billion in 2028, Bernstein analysts forecasted earlier this year, though that figure still pales next to the US\$375 billion in sales Nvidia is expected to generate in a similar period, based on Visible Alpha estimates.

It's not only US tech firms that are embracing DIY. Chinese giants like Alibaba and Baidu are developing their own semiconductors as part of the country's push to become less dependent on American technology. Carmakers are eyeing custom silicon in autonomous driving initiatives. The boom has prompted Japan's SoftBank, which owns chip design firm Arm, to explore a takeover of the US\$75 billion Marvell, Bloomberg reported in November, citing sources.

In October, OpenAI said it will jointly develop 10 gigawatts of custom AI accelerators with Broadcom. Though the two

companies did not disclose financial terms, Nvidia boss Jensen Huang recently stated that one gigawatt of data centre capacity translates into US\$35 billion of revenue for his company. That implies OpenAI's partnership represents US\$350 billion of foregone sales for Nvidia.

Yet diverting sales from Nvidia does not necessarily mean the buyers are better off. A sizeable share of any potential savings OpenAI enjoys will probably go to Broadcom, which Bernstein analyst Mark Li reckons earns a gross margin of up to 60% on its ASIC business. Over time, companies may acquire enough chipmaking expertise to work directly with manufacturers like TSMC, as Apple does today. Google looks the furthest along; Bernstein's Li believes the company can handle the core “front-end” chip designs in-house and will soon outsource back-end designs and peripheral components to Taiwan's MediaTek, which charges less than Broadcom, producing annual cost savings of US\$5 billion.

Apple's 40% gross margin for iPhones suggests its vertical integration has paid off. The case for cloud computing giants doing the same looks less clear-cut, though. Using custom-made chips that are cheaper but less powerful might end up costing more after factoring in land, electricity costs and other infrastructure outlays.

Key to that argument is Nvidia's technological edge. A December

analysis from Morgan Stanley found that the latest Blackwell GPUs can boast 1.9 times more performance per watt over Amazon's Trainium 2 chips when training AI models, based on certain assumptions. In other words, Amazon will need nearly twice as much electricity to achieve the same level of computing power. This explains why the biggest tech firms will remain Nvidia's top customers for the foreseeable future.

Even so, the economics of ASICs can work provided sufficient scale. Take AI inference, which does not require as much computing power. Installing a cluster of 24,000 Blackwell processors means upfront hardware costs of US\$852 million, Morgan Stanley estimated – leading to annual depreciation charges of US\$213 million over four years. A same-sized cluster of Google TPUs will cost US\$99 million in hardware, and US\$25 million in annual depreciation. Developing chipmaking capabilities will also enable companies to drive a harder bargain with Nvidia.

Ultimately, investors will be paying attention to the return tech companies can earn on their investments. Lower upfront and operating costs might help, but ASICs still have to be competitive in performance and generate revenue. That will determine whether it was worth reinventing the silicon wheel.

**Robyn Mak** is a contributor to Reuters Breakingviews.

## Boeing gets Dubai Airshow boost as Emirates orders 65 more 777X

**DUBAI:** Boeing took centre stage at day one of the Dubai Airshow on Monday, booking a US\$38 billion (RM158 billion) order from host carrier Emirates and clinching more deals with African carriers, while China displayed its C919 in the Middle East for the first time.

Thousands of guests flooded exhibition halls and a runway around Al Maktoum International Airport, where airplanes, helicopters and drones were on display.

The Middle East aerospace gala has in the past seen major order announcements as its regional carriers turned into some of the world's biggest airlines, with local governments betting on tourism and transportation to diversify economies away from oil.

Dubai-based Emirates said on Monday it was ordering another 65 Boeing 777-9 jets, cementing its position as the world's biggest buyer of wide-body jets as the US planemaker agreed to carry out a feasibility study for a larger version.

The purchase brings Emirates' orders for the 777X family to 270 jets and comes despite recent delays in delivery of the world's largest twin-engined jetliner. Analysts said part of the deal could incorporate compensation for earlier delays.

“It is a long-term commitment that supports hundreds of thousands of high-value factory jobs,” Emirates CEO Sheikh Ahmed Saeed Al Maktoum told a news conference.

Bloomberg earlier reported that Emirates was set to place an order for dozens of 777X jets.

Boeing also said Ethiopian Airlines placed an order for a further 11 737 MAX 8 aircraft, while Air Senegal will purchase nine 737 MAX jets, with options for another six. Brazil's Embraer posted orders from Air Cote d'Ivoire and Helvetica and hinted at higher production following a string of sales wins.

Airbus sat out Monday's activity but looks set to beat Boeing to the lion's share of a major order from flydubai at the show, Reuters reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

Freighters are also in demand as carriers renew fleets.

As the two Western giants top up their bulging order books, China's Comac has stepped up a marketing push for its C919 jetliner as it moves to compete on the global stage.

However, its two existing plane models – the C909 and C919 – lack key certifications from Western regulators, and analysts do not expect China to take a significant slice of the global jet market beyond deals with supportive countries any time soon.

Emirates is the largest customer for the 777X, which is now seven years late after Boeing took a US\$4.9 billion charge last month and announced a further one-year delay in deliveries to 2027.

Emirates' president Tim Clark told a recent podcast hosted by Abu Dhabi-based *The National* that he hoped Boeing or Airbus would build larger models of their biggest long-haul jets, while describing both as “very risk-averse”.

Emirates, now in its 40th year, championed the Airbus A380



A Boeing 777-9 sits on the tarmac at Al-Maktoum International Airport during the Dubai Airshow 2025 in Dubai. Emirates ordered 65 Boeing 777X planes in a deal worth US\$38 billion. – AFPPIX

superjumbo, the world's largest airliner, to feed its Dubai hub with long-haul passengers. But Airbus stopped producing the double-decker in 2021 after weak demand from other carriers.

Emirates said its agreement with Boeing “provides strong backing” for the study to be carried out by Boeing to develop a 777-10, a larger variant of its 777X family.

Airbus' commercial aircraft CEO Christian Scherer told Reuters that Airbus was also studying a larger version of its A350 family.

First, Airbus must respond to calls from Emirates for improvements to its

existing A350-1000 model, which the Dubai carrier has avoided due to concerns over maintenance costs.

Scherer, speaking at his last air show before retiring, said he was confident of winning Emirates support for the A350-1000 once the improvements had been demonstrated and that this effort could leave room for further growth in the product line-up.

The comments suggest it may be too early for Emirates to order the A350-1000 at this week's show, despite speculation of a deal drawing a line under its earlier reluctance. Emirates, however, has voiced support for the

recently introduced A350-900.

Meanwhile, Gulf Air signed an agreement yesterday with Boeing to buy at least 12 Boeing 787 Dreamliner planes, the carrier said.

The definitive purchase agreement to buy between 12 and 15 Dreamliner planes, signed at the Dubai Airshow, finalises an announcement in July that the carrier would buy 12 aircraft with an option for six more, Gulf Air said.

A White House official said at the time that the Gulf Air deal was valued at about US\$7 billion, part of a broader pledge by Bahrain to invest US\$17 billion in the US. – Reuters

# MARKET ROUND-UP: NOV 18

18-Nov-2025

Bursa Malaysia

## Trade Statistics

	Net (in RM million)	Participation
Retail	+42.13	14.45%
Institutions	+416.32	45.56%
Foreign	-458.46	39.99%



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

Inter-Pacific Securities Sdn. Bhd. is now rebranded as Berjaya Securities Sdn. Bhd.



**Berjaya Securities** (formerly known as Inter-Pacific Securities Sdn Bhd)

- Quick updates on market news, statistics & information
- Monthly Traders' Talk for directions & positioning
- Company coverage & trading insights
- One-to-One trading coaching (available upon request)

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

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

**DISCLAIMER:** The data and reports are provided as a service to investors. Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd shall not be liable or responsible for any consequences resulting from usage of the information.

## Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	11,969.90 -103.10
FBMKLCI	1,614.06 -13.37
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	534.54 -4.76
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	165.51 -1.78
CONSTRUCTION	310.44 -2.81
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,338.50 -157.50
ENERGY	761.51 +0.51
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	490.69 -3.61
HEALTH CARE	1,541.59 -20.72
TRANSPORTATION	1,013.84 +0.95
PROPERTY	1,021.26 -6.20
PLANTATION	8,118.62 +0.48
FBMSHA	11,968.10 -105.80
FBMACE	4,912.10 -103.10
TECHNOLOGY	59.23 -0.98

TURNOVER: 4.331 bil VALUE: RM3.109 bil

## Bursa ends lower on broad-based weakness, tracking regional peers

BURSA Malaysia ended lower yesterday amid broad-based weakness in the local bourse, in line with regional markets.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI trimmed 13.37 points, or 0.82%, to 1,614.06 from Monday's close of 1,627.43.

The benchmark index opened 0.43 of-a-point easier at 1,627.0 and fluctuated between 1,613.76 and 1,627.32 throughout the trading session.

Market breadth was negative, with decliners trouncing advancers 934 to 313, while 499 counters were unchanged, 1,021 untraded and 11 suspended.

Turnover rose to 4.33 billion units worth RM3.20 billion versus Monday's 3.77 billion units worth RM2.47 billion.

SPI Asset Management managing partner Stephen Innes said regional markets were trading defensively yesterday, with Bursa Malaysia caught in the same slipstream.

Among heavyweights, YTL Corp gained one sen to RM2.44, TM bagged six sen to RM7.27, Maybank and IHH Healthcare were flat at RM9.92 and RM8.20, respectively, while Public Bank shed five sen to RM4.25, CIMB slid 16 sen to RM7.45, TNB went down 10 sen to RM13.18, and Press Metal eased two sen to RM6.44.

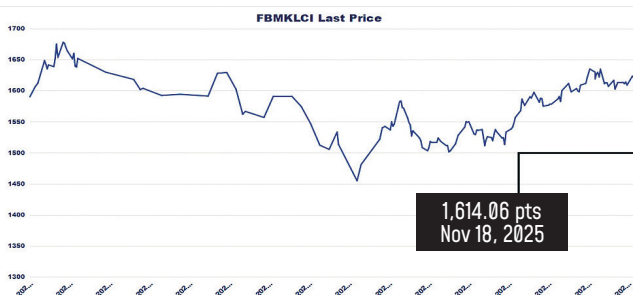
On the most active list, ACE Market debutant PMW International edged up half-a-sen to 34.5 sen, MMAG rose 1.5 sen to 7.5 sen. TWL and Gamuda were flat at 2.5 sen and RM5.24, respectively.

Among the top gainers, Nestle increased by 30 sen to RM112.70, United Plantations firmed 24 sen to RM27.04, Arka surged 14 sen to 85 sen, and HI Mobility climbed 13 sen to RM2.63.

As for the top losers, Malaysian Pacific Industries dipped 90 sen to RM30.60, Petronas Dagangan slipped 60 sen to RM21.50, Dutch Lady gave up 44 sen to RM29.30, and Petronas Gas shaved 38 sen to RM18.14. - Bernama

## Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-CWKJ	0.095	-0.035	-26.92	4,137,905
HSI-CWK7	0.090	-0.010	-10.00	3,741,311
HSI-PWLG	0.230	+0.045	+24.32	2,705,124
HSI-PWL1	0.240	+0.035	+17.07	1,975,040
PMW	0.345	+0.005	+1.47	1,029,277
GENETEC	0.320	-0.085	-20.99	920,104
VS	0.470	-0.035	-6.93	681,533
HSI-CWK4	0.100	-0.030	-23.08	633,123
TANCO	0.990	+0.025	+2.59	632,383
ZETRIX	0.820	-0.005	-0.61	565,319
HSI-CWIQ	0.210	-0.125	-37.31	564,823
HSI-PWNP	0.675	+0.095	+16.38	525,649
HSI-PWL4	0.175	+0.020	+12.90	523,488
HSI-CWKO	0.325	-0.085	-20.73	481,207
MMAG	0.075	+0.015	+25.00	472,306
ALIBABA-C49	0.135	+0.005	+3.85	405,219
HSTECH-H41	0.510	+0.055	+12.09	314,140
TWL	0.025	-	-	302,300
ZETRIX-CAK	0.105	-0.010	-8.70	300,000
GAMUDA	5.240	-	-	276,041



## Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
UTDPLT	27.040	+0.240	30,768
HSI-PWL9	1.560	+0.160	400
ARKA	0.850	+0.140	14
HI	2.630	+0.130	22,876
KLCC	8.850	+0.130	4,445
HLIND	15.220	+0.120	1,347
HSI-PWNC	1.260	+0.120	400
NIKKEI-HT	0.620	+0.110	3,675
SOP	3.840	+0.110	12,874
HSI-PWNA	0.910	+0.105	1,300
HSI-PWNP	0.675	+0.095	525,649
BIPORT	5.100	+0.090	10
HSI-PWLE	0.575	+0.085	3,002
HSI-PWNB	0.475	+0.080	700
MBMR	5.260	+0.080	2,341
HSI-PWNG	0.615	+0.075	400
SP500-H61	0.545	+0.075	18,566
HSI-PWLZ	0.540	+0.070	400
HSI-PWND	0.720	+0.070	1,000
TAANN	4.260	+0.070	3,912

## Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-PWJ0	0.035	+133.33	5,000
BIOHLDG-WB	0.010	+100.00	511
BORNOIL	0.010	+100.00	73,629
HSI-PWLX	0.020	+100.00	47
AHB-WC	0.015	+50.00	4,504
FBMKLCI-HEC	0.015	+50.00	5,100
HSI-PWJY	0.030	+50.00	5,379
MNRB-CJ	0.045	+50.00	11,900
PERMAJU	0.015	+50.00	20,250
SG	0.015	+50.00	17,823
WIDAD	0.015	+50.00	277
XIAOMI-H1C	0.045	+50.00	2,500
HSI-PWLQ	0.050	+42.86	67,539
HSI-PWLC	0.165	+37.50	157,847
HSI-PWH9	0.020	+33.33	250
HSI-PWJW	0.060	+33.33	1,050
TRIVE	0.020	+33.33	1
HSI-PWLR	0.170	+30.77	50
HSI-PWLI	0.065	+30.00	1,020
SPSETIA-C1E	0.065	+30.00	20

## World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA [US]	46,590.24	-557.24	-1.18
S&P 500 [US]	6,672.41	-61.7	-0.92
NASDAQ [US]	22,708.07	-192.52	-0.84
NYSE [US]	21,213.42	-256.84	-1.2
EURO STOXX 50 [EUR]	5,564.81	-76.13	-1.35
FTSE 100 [UK]	9,586.66	-88.77	-0.92
DAX [GER]	23,288.93	-300.36	-1.27
NIKKEI 225 [JPN]	48,702.98	-1620.93	-3.22
TOPIX INDEX [JPN]	3,251.10	-96.43	-2.88
HANG SENG INDEX [HK]	25,930.03	-454.25	-1.72
CSI 300 [CHN]	4,568.19	-29.86	-0.65
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	225.8	-0.48	-0.21
SHANGHAI SE COM [CHN]	3,939.81	-32.22	-0.81
KOSPI INDEX [SK]	3,953.62	-135.63	-3.32
SENSEX INDEX [IND]	84,860.06	-90.89	-0.11
ASX 200 [AUS]	8,469.14	-167.26	-1.94
ALL ORDINARIES INDX [AUS]	8,738.27	-177.47	-1.99
FBM KLCI	1,614.06	-13.37	-0.82
STRAITS TIMES INDEX [S'PORE]	4,505.44	-38.15	-0.84
WTI [US\$/BBL.]	59.61	-0.29	-0.48
BRENT [US\$/BBL.]	63.86	-0.34	-0.53
GOLD [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	4,036.20	-38.3	-0.94
SILVER [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	50.11	-0.6	-1.19
PLATINUM [US\$/T OZ]	1,537.92	1.39	0.07
COPPER [COMEX] [US CENTS/LB.]	506.3	-2.35	-0.46
COPPER 3MO [LME] [US\$/MT]	10,778.50	-73.5	-0.68
CORN [US CENTS/BU.]	447.75	-0.25	-0.06
WHEAT [US CENTS/BU.]	559.5	1	0.18
SOYBEAN OIL [CBOT] [US CENTS/LB.]	51.93	0.45	0.87
COCOA [ICE] [US\$/MT]	5,436.00	-21	-0.38
RUBBER [S'PORE] [US CENTS/KG]	172	-0.4	-0.23

As at 6pm, Nov 18.

## Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
MPI	30.600	-0.900	3,083
PETDAG	21.500	-0.600	3,995
DLADY	29.300	-0.440	268
PETGAS	18.140	-0.380	3,331
NESTLE	112.700	-0.300	765
NIKKEI-CU	1.210	-0.270	20
HLFG	17.180	-0.240	673
HSI-CWMR	0.685	-0.235	1,158
HEIM	22.600	-0.220	1,366
SAM	4.110	-0.200	11,889
WPRTS	5.340	-0.190	35,297
NIKKEI-CT	0.570	-0.165	3,326
CIMB	7.450	-0.160	104,611
KGB-WB	3.820	-0.150	827
HSI-CWI4	0.510	-0.145	700
HSI-CWME	0.845	-0.145	800
ALLIANZ-PA	18.380	-0.140	109
CARLSBG	17.060	-0.140	1,404
CDB	3.470	-0.140	101,460
HSI-CWMB	0.960	-0.140	1,000

## Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
GENETEC-CO	0.005	-66.67	5,000
HSI-CWI5	0.055	-63.33	15,494
HSI-CWKK	0.050	-62.96	149
HARTA-C3F	0.060	-60.00	100
KLK-C42	0.060	-60.00	20
HSI-CWKM	0.050	-58.33	6,997
PICHEM-CIT	0.035	-56.25	209
YTL-C2C	0.020	-55.56	275
YTLPOWR-C83	0.020	-55.56	510
GLDHC-C6	0.030	-53.85	60
ARMADA-C1F	0.005	-50.00	470
FOCUS	0.005	-50.00	9,000
GENETEC-CP	0.005	-50.00	14,000
HSI-CWI1	0.035	-50.00	980
HSI-CWI8	0.010	-50.00	5,400
HSI-CWIP	0.020	-50.00	45,479
INSAS-WC	0.005	-50.00	2,000
NATGATE-CT	0.005	-50.00	5,000
SNTORIA	0.005	-50.00	1
SUPERMX-C5C	0.015	-50.00	800

# MARKETS/FROM THE BROKERS

SUNBIZ presents extracts of a selection of commentaries and research reports received from stockbrokers on counters that could be of interest to investors.

Compiled by SunBiz Team

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## NCT Group in MoU to enhance logistics in smart industrial park

**PETALING JAYA:** With logistics as a vital pillar of its integrated value chain, NCT Group of Companies through its subsidiary NCT Land Sdn Bhd, has signed a strategic MoU with Speedex Express Logistics (M) Sdn Bhd to deliver efficient and seamless logistics solutions within NCT Smart Industrial Park (NSIP).

Group managing director Datuk Seri Yap Ngan Choy said this partnership reflects their commitment to strengthen the park's operational backbone by providing end-to-end logistical capacity that their investors need to scale and compete.

With Phase 1 nearing completion and almost 100% sold, the addition of Speedex to their partner network is timely as it enables NSIP to offer a complete and efficient logistics proposition that directly supports business growth and competitiveness, he added.

As the first logistics partner of NSIP, Speedex will play an instrumental role in supporting the park's expanding business environment through its comprehensive logistics offerings, which include sea, air, and land freight, customs brokerage and compliance, as well as warehousing and inventory management.

Leveraging NSIP's prime location near major gateways such as Port Klang and Kuala Lumpur International Airport Terminals 1 and 2, the partnership will enhance supply chain efficiency, ensure smoother cargo flow, and strengthen industrial connectivity within the 730ha development.

Speedex director Naresh Kumar Sundram said through this partnership, they are committed to delivering agile and dependable logistics solutions that complement NSIP's state-of-the-art infrastructure.

NSIP, launched in 2023, will be developed in five phases with a total GDV of RM7.9 billion.

## Ringgit slips further as US rate outlook stays unclear

**THE** ringgit continued its technical correction, closing lower against the US dollar yesterday, as traders and investors cashed in amid uncertainty over the US interest rate outlook.

At 6pm, the ringgit eased to 4.1605/1660 versus the greenback from Monday's close of 4.1480/1515.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said the correction seems appropriate given that technical indicators have flashed an overbought condition.

"Hence, the correction would mean the ringgit would be adjusting to its appropriate value given the prevailing economic condition.

"Based on the interest rate futures, the odds for an interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve in the December meeting have gone down significantly to around 42% from more than 90% in the previous month," he told Bernama.

At the close, the ringgit traded mostly lower against a basket of major currencies.

It inched up versus the yen to 2.6800/6838 from 2.6805/6829 at Monday's close, but fell against the euro to 4.8216/8280 from 4.8125/8166 and slipped vis-a-vis the British pound to 5.4719/4791 from 5.4608/4654 previously.

The ringgit traded lower against Asean currencies.

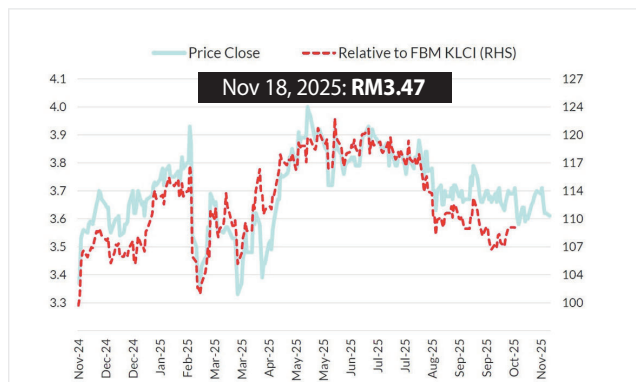
It weakened against the Thai baht to 12.8252/8481 from 12.7847/8018 at yesterday's close, depreciated versus the Singapore dollar to 3.1938/1982 from 3.1864/1893, eased vis-a-vis the Indonesian rupiah to 248.3/248.7 from 247.8/248.1 and shed against the Philippine peso at 7.05/7.06 from 7.04/7.05 previously.

## Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.2380	4.0930	4.0830
1 Australian Dollar	2.7590	2.6470	2.6310
1 Brunei Dollar	3.2460	3.1460	3.1380
1 Canadian Dollar	3.0090	2.9250	2.9130
1 Euro	4.9070	4.7500	4.7300
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.3990	2.3110	2.2950
1 Singapore Dollar	3.2460	3.1460	3.1380
1 Sterling Pound	5.5690	5.3920	5.3720
1 Swiss Franc	5.3490	5.1220	5.1070
100 UAE Dirham	116.4800	110.4500	110.2500
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.5300	3.2880	3.0880
100 Chinese Renminbi	59.8900	57.3700	57.3700
100 Danish Krone	67.3600	61.9900	61.7900
100 Hongkong Dollar	54.9700	52.2400	52.0400
100 Indian Rupee	4.8500	4.5500	4.3500
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0262	0.0237	0.0187
100 Japanese Yen	2.7470	2.6220	2.6120
100 New Taiwan Dollar	14.6000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	42.9400	39.5000	39.3000
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.5300	1.4200	1.2200
100 Philippine Peso	7.2800	6.8600	6.6600
100 Qatar Riyal	117.2800	111.3400	111.1400
100 Saudi Riyal	114.0000	108.2300	108.0300
100 South Africa Rand	25.5200	23.0500	22.8500
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.4100	1.3000	1.1000
100 Swedish Krona	46.0300	41.9300	41.7300
100 Thai Baht	13.6000	12.0700	11.6700

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

## CelcomDigi Bhd Neutral. Target price: RM3.95



Source: Bloomberg

**CELCOMDIGI'S** Q3'25 and 9M'25 results were in line with our earlier lowered expectations, but missed Street estimates. With IT investments and upgrades set to pick up in FY26 and the potential decommissioning of additional rural sites, its integration cost should remain elevated in FY26, in our view.

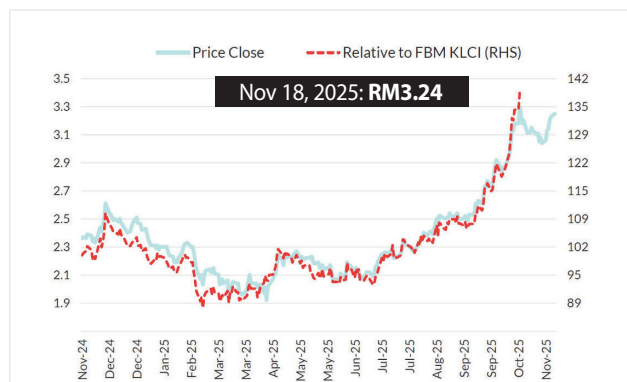
Q3'25 core earnings of RM400.3 million (-7.4% QoQ, -8.4% YoY) brought 9M'25 core earnings to RM1.21 billion. This made up 74% of our forecast but trailed consensus estimate, at 70%. One-off adjustments (staff workforce rationalisation, bad debt provision) of RM42 million were recognised in 9M'25 net of tax. An expected 3.6sen DPS puts cumulative DPS at 11.1sen (9M'24: 10.6sen), ie a 108% DPR. Management has retained guidance of low-to-mid single-digit core EBIT growth on low single-digit service revenue growth.

Service revenue ticked up by a marginal 1.3% QoQ and was flat in 9M'25, with double-digit home fibre growth. Structural bulk SMS revenue pressure continues to crimp enterprise mobile, with the impact likely to tail off in Q4'25. Prepaid revenue was steady QoQ with higher ARPU offsetting lower subs, thanks to the focus on higher-value customers. The upselling of its converged plan, CD One, continues to fuel the momentum of the postpaid segment (Q3'25: +4.3% YoY).

IT upgrades should keep integration cost elevated in FY26; reviewing additional sites for decommissioning. YTD gross opex synergies are trending in line at RM119 million, with integration cost at RM154 million (Q3'25: RM36 million/Q2'25: RM63 million). CDB has integrated and modernised over 90% of sites as at end-September (Q2'25: 84%).

NEUTRAL with RM3.95 TP. - RHB Research, Nov 18

## 99 Speed Mart Retail Holdings Bhd Buy. Target price: RM3.56



Source: Bloomberg

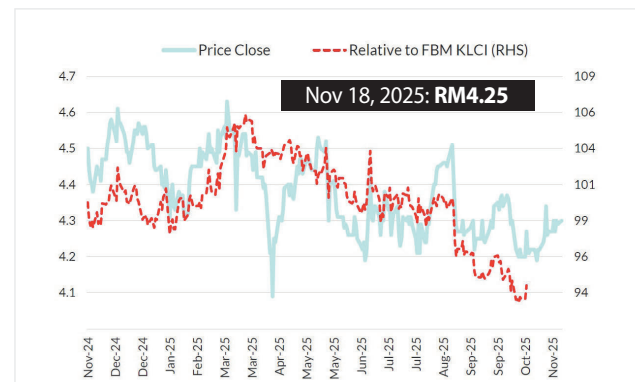
**CORE** net profit of RM457 million (+18% YoY) accounted for 72% and 75% of our and consensus full-year forecasts respectively.

YoY, 9M'25 revenue rose 13% to RM8.4 billion supported by new store expansion (+269 or 10% YoY to 2966 outlets) and SSSG of 6.5%. This, together with a healthy GPM expansion on an increasing scale have offset the higher opex stemming from the minimum wage hike. As a result, 9M'25 core net profit grew 18% to RM457 million. QoQ, Q3'25 revenue saw a 12% jump to surpass the RM3 billion mark thanks to longer operating hours effective July and increasing SARA programme contribution. That said, this comes at the expense of higher opex and lower GPM respectively, and hence, the relatively modest QoQ net profit growth of 5% (net margin: -0.4ppts). 9M'25 DPS of 4.5 sen represents a payout ratio of 83%.

The fiscal policy to increase the budget allocation for SARA in 2026 is positive to 99SMART considering its established market position and brand equity. It now has more than 2,000 outlets activated for the programme and is targeting to add more. In addition, the group is well-positioned to benefit from the rising disposable income of the lower income groups as well as the downtrading consumption trends as a result of elevated inflationary pressures, given its extensive store network and consumer preference for mini-markets to shop for groceries. Meanwhile, we believe earnings growth over a longer term will also be sustained by 99SMART's strategies to expand its addressable markets. These include diversifying its sourcing options to enhance its product offerings, developing its bulk sales platform, and expanding beyond Malaysia.

BUY with RM3.56 TP. - RHB Research, Nov 18

## Public Bank Bhd Buy. Target price: RM5.00



Source: Bloomberg

**Q3'25** net profit of RM1.8 billion (+5% QoQ, -4% YoY) brought the 9M'25 total to RM5.3 billion (flat YoY), meeting our and consensus full-year estimates. YoY, 9M operating income grew 6% mostly thanks to non-ll (+18% from treasury and insurance income), while NII growth was more modest at +3% (+6% YoY loan growth mitigated by a 5bps NIM compression). Credit costs also came in slightly higher at 3bps (9M'24: 1bp), albeit still within guidance. 9M'25 reported ROE stood at 12.6% (9M'24: 13.2%), which was short of PBK's earlier FY25 target of 13%, leading to a revised 12.5-13% guidance.

As expected, Q3'25 saw a sharp 8bps QoQ NIM compression following the central bank's policy rate cut in early July. Its 9M'25 NIM of 2.16% implies a 5bps compression from the 2024 average. This was mitigated by steady loan growth of +1% (retail and SME-led), while non-ll also grew +14% on stronger fee and non-fee income. Management thinks NIM will likely remain compressed in Q4'25 as the seasonal competition for deposits kicks in, but reiterated its guidance for the year, ie mid-to-high single digit YoY compression (2024 NIM: 2.21%). Deposits grew by 5% YoY (QoQ: +1%), with the LDR tightening slightly to 98.1% (Q2'25: 97.8%). Elsewhere, capital remains robust, with group and bank CET-1 ratios at 13.8% and 11.9% (20bps down QoQ).

In Q3'25, management wrote back another RM68 million of management overlays, bringing the YTD total to RM300 million (leaving a remainder of RM1 billion). While the ROE target was revised downwards, all other FY25 targets were unchanged, ie loan growth of 5-6% and single-digit credit costs.

BUY with RM5.00 TP. - RHB Research, Nov 18



# the Sun **LYFE**

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## WEEKLY FOCUS

### MONDAY

Technology and social media

### TUESDAY

Family and parenting

### WEDNESDAY

Fashion and beauty

### THURSDAY

Home and living

### FRIDAY

Travel and leisure

### SATURDAY

Food and beverage

# Fashion that **waus**

M'sian designer bags prize for avant-garde creation - **P22**

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'Maga' look flourishes under Trump presidency

**p24**

Frankenstein reflects on cycles of abuse

**p25**

Lamp of Murmuur returns to experimental roots

—BERNAMAPIC



Faris.

# Young Malaysian **waus** on global stage

➤ Designer showcases avant-garde ensemble at 2025 World of WearableArt

The shoulder system with padding is made from recycled materials.



Faris says the traditional *wau bulan* symbol formed the foundation of his design.

**T**HE success of young Malaysian designer Mohammad Faris Mohd Fairusham at the 2025 World of WearableArt (Wow) in Wellington, New Zealand in September marks a new chapter in his creative journey to bring Malaysian heritage and design to the global arena.

In the event, the Miri-born, Kuala Lumpur-raised talent showcased an avant-garde garment inspired by the *wau bulan*, earning him the top prize in the competition's Air Section category and placing a powerful Malaysian cultural emblem on an international artistic platform.

Wow is a world-renowned wearable art experience, where an annual design competition culminates in a spectacular show.

"I grew up seeing the *wau* (traditional Malaysian kite) but never got involved in making one, so this project became a way for me to reconnect with my cultural roots.

"I wanted to show that Malaysian heritage can be transformed into something modern, avant-garde and globally resonant without losing its identity," Faris, 22, told Bernama.

Having completed his Bachelor of Commerce degree (Finance and Information Systems) at Victoria University of Wellington in June, he is now focusing on producing more experimental avant-garde designs, especially for the stage and performances.

"My interest lies in designs that tell stories and evoke emotion. This win (Wow 2025) opened major doors for me – not just in fashion, but also in terms of confidence.

"Malaysian designers and art communities have started contacting me, and many are now curious about Wow," he said.

He is open to pursuing formal studies in fashion and plans to continue joining

international competitions, as well as collaborate with local and overseas designers.

"Although Wellington is small, it has so much soul. People there appreciate art and are unafraid to express themselves.

"From that, I learned that art unites communities and it convinced me that Malaysian art and culture deserve to be celebrated on the world stage," said Faris, who plans to compete again in next year's Wow.

He also revealed that participating in Wow 2025 was part of his healing process after a tragic accident at Lake Tekapo in March 2024 claimed the lives of his two close friends Megat Ashman Aqif Megat Irman Jefni and Wan Nur Adlina Alisa, both students at the University of Canterbury.

"During the period of grief, sewing and Wow became my way to rebuild my spirit.

"So when my creation won, it felt like the effort and love I poured into it represented not only myself but my country. It meant so much to me and left me truly speechless, yet

incredibly happy," he said.

He said while studying in New Zealand, he bought a second-hand sewing machine and began upcycling old clothes.

"But it wasn't until joining Wow that I really learned how to create garments from scratch," he said.

Elaborating on his participation in Wow 2025, he said the traditional *wau bulan* symbol formed the foundation of his design and became a personal way to reconnect with his family's Kelantanese heritage.

"My search for ideas began with visual references on Pinterest and various online archives.

"One striking red-and-black floral image caught my attention and became the foundation of my final concept.

"From there, I developed the two-dimensional *wau* shape into a three-dimensional structure, turning the central curve into a corset and the upper section into wing-like elements to create a dramatic silhouette aligned with the Air Section theme," he explained.

The process of constructing his design began in November last year and took nearly six months to complete – all done in Wellington while Faris juggled his studies and part-time work.

The biggest challenge, however, was ensuring that the rattan-based frame of the garment remained sturdy yet comfortable to wear, as well as handling the packaging and shipment of the costume from Wellington in the North Island (of New Zealand) to Wow's office in Nelson in the South Island.

"I had to learn how to bend, bind and balance the structure so it was strong but still comfortable for the model to wear throughout three weeks of performances.

"I also designed a shoulder system with padding made from recycled materials, including fabric from gold-coloured Chinese tissue boxes, to improve stability and reflect Malaysia's cultural diversity.

"Logistically, the garment's size made packing very difficult. A friend of mine who was an architecture student helped with the technical aspects and finishing touches, even designing a custom box.

"But when it arrived (in Nelson), the box was badly dented. Fortunately, the rattan structure I built stayed intact," he said.

## Kebaya as agent of diplomacy

**MORE** than just a traditional garment, the *kebaya* – recognised by Unesco as an intangible cultural heritage through a joint nomination by five Asean countries – stands as a symbol of beauty and shared heritage that connects nations across the region.

This spirit of cultural diplomacy will be showcased once again at the Malaysia Kebaya Carnival 3.0, taking place on Dec 5 at New Ocean World Fine Food City, Selangor.

Supported by the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry, Tourism Malaysia, Finas and regional strategic partners, the carnival not only celebrates the elegance of the *kebaya* but also seeks to strengthen regional ties through cultural collaboration and creative exchange.

Miss Malaysia Kebaya founder and chairman Dr Jason Hee said the uniqueness of the *kebaya* lies not only in its intricate design and cut but also in the cultural values shared by nations in the region.

"The *kebaya* holds a special



Hee says the uniqueness of the *kebaya* lies not only in its intricate design and cut but also in the cultural values shared by nations in the region. – ALL PICS FROM BERNAMA

meaning across Southeast Asia... it is a heritage we share. When Malaysia embraces it as a platform for diplomacy, it becomes more than fashion – it is about connection,



The *kebaya* is a cultural heritage shared across Southeast Asia. The Malaysia Kebaya Carnival 3.0 will take place on Dec 5.

understanding and mutual respect between cultures.

"Fashion can serve as a unifying language. When Asean ambassadors and representatives sit together to witness a *kebaya* showcase, that in itself is a form of soft diplomacy, one that introduces Malaysian culture with grace and elegance," he said.

The Malaysia Kebaya Carnival will feature a range of activities, including exhibitions, workshops and cultural

diplomacy forums.

The highlight of the event, Asean Fashion and Cultural Diplomacy Gala Night, will feature fashion showcases, cultural performances and the presentation of the MFMPA Asean Awards 2025, honouring individuals and organisations that have elevated Malaysia's name in the fields of fashion and creative arts internationally.

Hee added that the carnival serves

as a platform to empower women and youth through creativity, entrepreneurship and appreciation for heritage, in line with the aspirations of the National Culture Policy.

"We want the world to see the *kebaya* not merely as a classic attire but as a symbol of the future, a way to promote Malaysia through a culture that is vibrant, modern and inclusive," he said. – Bernama



Trump has mobilised many young voters with his nationalist, pro-business and 'macho' appeal.  
 - AFP/IC



Rein Lively points to Trump's daughter Ivanka and his daughter-in-law Lara as her role models.  
 - PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @AMERICAFIRSTPR

# Rise of 'Maga face'

➤ In Trump's America, fashion, makeup become political calling card

**L**ONG, blond, wavy hair, heavy makeup and cosmetic injections: like many women in Donald Trump's orbit, political consultant Melissa Rein Lively wears her support for the US president on her face.

With the rise of Trump's Make America Great Again (Maga) movement, a group of well-connected and well-off Republican women have come into the spotlight sporting what the US media have dubbed the "Maga look".

"This has always been my look. I just found my tribe," said Rein Lively, 40, founder of America First, a public relations agency that provides "anti-woke" services.

"It's so much bigger than politics. It's friendships. It's relationships.

"That Maga look really signals to other people that you're on the same team," she told *AFP* in a recent interview.

These new-style conservatives, almost always devout Christians, espouse traditional values while pursuing personal ambition.

Since the September assassination of top Maga influencer and Trump ally Charlie Kirk, his widow Erika has taken the reins of his youth mobilisation group.

During a memorial service for her husband, the 36-year-old former Miss Arizona dabbed her impeccably made-up eyes with a handkerchief and praised a Christian marriage. She cited a New Testament passage that instructs wives to submit to their husbands for protection.

"It's so hard to articulate the beauty of an Ephesians 5 marriage when you actually have a man that's worth following," she said.

## Not just fashion

While professing family values and religious beliefs, these Maga women are anything but shy in their appearance.

Clad in skirts and dresses, almost always wearing their hair long, they can be recognised by heavy makeup, which includes well-defined eyebrows and "contouring" - a technique that uses dark and light shades to sculpt the face.

Many opt for cosmetic interventions, including fillers and surgery to achieve fuller cheeks, plumper lips and a refined nose.

Rein Lively pointed to Trump's daughter Ivanka and his daughter-in-law Lara as her role models.

Juliet Williams, a professor of gender studies at UCLA, said: "It's a mistake to dismiss this as just about fashion, just about makeup.

"It's actually absolutely central because this Trump Maga movement was able to return to the White House in 2024, I believe, essentially because of leveraging the gender war."

## Two hours in gym every day

The 79-year-old Trump has mobilised many young voters with his nationalist, pro-business and "macho" appeal.

The Maga face is political because it is "a way of signalling to all women that your value depends on your attractiveness to men," said Williams, adding that Trump used to run a beauty pageant.

Rein Lively, however, rejected any idea of submission or coercion.

"By absolutely nobody's volition other than my own do I spend two hours in the gym every day, get my hair done every three and a half weeks on the button, get my nails done, get my eyebrows done, get my skincare done, get Botox," she said.

The PR consultant vied for the job of White House spokesperson for Trump's second term, but the president ultimately picked long-time loyalist Karoline Leavitt.

Leavitt, 28, has surrounded herself with young assistants who emulate her impeccably groomed look, which includes high heels, even on trips that involve a lot of running around.

"I look at these Maga women and I don't see them as fashion victims... but I see it as war paint.

"And, you know, embracing a system that is ultimately designed to work against them," Williams said.

## Ironic

One of the women most frequently cited as embodying the so-called "Maga face" is Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, who has led Trump's hardline immigration policy.

"The long-hair extensions, the big lips, the big cheeks, the makeup, the lash extensions, it's like she's doing drag," said Daniel Belkin, a dermatologist in New York.

Belkin finds it paradoxical Maga supporters are hostile to drag queen shows and condemn breast augmentation and facial reconstruction surgery for transgender people. They often resort to similar procedures to accentuate their femininity and masculinity.

"It is ironic, because they're so against gender-affirming care for trans people, but they're doing gender affirming care for themselves," Belkin said.

In a recent episode, the popular animated series *South Park* ridiculed Noem as a shrew with a face butchered by cosmetic procedures, which her assistants must constantly patch up for the cameras.

"It's so lazy to just constantly make fun of women for how they look," Noem protested during a recent interview.



Many Republican women have been adopting the 'Maga face' by getting botox and face fillers.  
 - PIC FROM PEXELS/COTTONBRO STUDIO



Heavy contouring is one of the techniques used to achieve a 'Maga face'.  
 - PIC FROM PEXELS/ALENADARMEL



MOVIE REVIEW

BY AMEEN AZIZI

**G**UILLERMO del Toro finally gets to make his own *Frankenstein*, and it is exactly the kind of feverish, hyper gothic passion project you would expect from him. Instead of doing a straight adaptation of the classic Mary Shelley novel, he pulls the story apart and rewires it through Catholic guilt, obsession and the kind of generational trauma that shapes people long before they ever realise it.

**No tragic genius**

From the start, the film makes it clear that this is not a story about a misunderstood scientist. Oscar Isaac plays Victor Frankenstein as an egomaniacal genius who thinks he is owed greatness. He is arrogant, narcissistic and genuinely damaged.

His obsession with conquering death stems from his damaged relationship with his surgeon father, a man who neglected and abused him. The moment that defined Victor's entire worldview was his father's failure to save his mother during his younger brother William's birth. Victor carries that resentment such as doctrine, and instead of breaking the cycle, he grows into the same kind of man, only far more cruel.

**Creature born into chaos**

Jacob Elordi's creature is the opposite. He begins the story basically as an infant, slow and curious, and absorbing the world one sensation at a time. The first book he learns to read is the Bible, which already tells you what kind of story del Toro is telling. Over time, the creature becomes articulate, thoughtful and painfully aware of what existence actually means.

Elordi plays him with this mix of huge physical power and deep emotional innocence. The towering, ragged design makes him look terrifying, but his behaviour never lets you forget he was thrown into life without guidance.

**Mia Goth's dual roles**

Mia Goth plays two roles that shape Victor's entire life. First, she appears as his mother, whose death becomes the root of his obsession with defeating death. Later, she plays Elizabeth Harlander, the woman engaged to Victor's younger brother William (Felix Kammerer). Elizabeth is smart, outspoken and completely aware of how arrogant and fragile the men around her are. Victor falls for her. William loves her. Even the creature is drawn to her gentle nature.

Elizabeth sees the creature for what he is: an innocent soul trapped in a body he never asked for. That purity stands in direct contrast to Victor, who constantly paints himself as the victim. Her affection for the creature makes Victor's delusions and self-pity look even smaller.



Isaac plays Victor, an ambitious surgeon who plans to conquer death.

**Cast:**  
Oscar Isaac,  
Jacob Elordi,  
Mia Goth,  
Christoph Waltz,  
Felix Kammerer,  
Lars Mikkelsen,  
David Bradley,  
Charles Dance,  
Ralph Ineson.

**Director:**  
Guillermo del Toro

E-VALUE	9
ACTING	10
PLOT	9

# Poetic rebirth of horror classic

► Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* blends scares, faith, tragedy

**Gothic style turned up to eleven**

Throughout the film, Victor keeps dreaming of what he believes is an angel, a sign from God that his obsession is justified. These delusions fit perfectly with del Toro's usual fascination with religion, saints and monsters.

The whole movie has the look and feel of *Crimson Peak* (2015) mixed with the steampunk flourishes of *Hellboy* (2004), with a bit of the biblical melancholy he explored in *Pinocchio* (2022). Fans of classic cinema might also catch one shot in the Frankenstein estate

that was lifted straight from Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975).

The production design is unreal. Almost everything feels like a physical set, not CGI, and you can feel the cold stone, the heavy wood and the icy tundra. It brings a sense of quality that is incredibly rare in modern films. This world looks built, not rendered.

There is also a very classic del Toro instinct here. Since *The Shape of Water* (2017), he has always been drawn to stories where women choose monsters over men, and the dynamic between Elizabeth and the creature continues that tradition.

Oddly, this is one of the first del Toro films where neither frequent collaborators Doug Jones nor Ron Perlman appears.

**Real horror being generational trauma**

At its core, *Frankenstein* is about cycles of abuse. Victor was abused and neglected. He treats the creature the same way. He plays the victim at every turn, and even the audience is tricked into sympathising with him at first because of how del Toro frames the opening. But the moment the full story is told, everything shifts. You see who the real monster is.

By the end, del Toro turns the story into something more emotional than expected. It becomes a quiet reflection on how cycles of cruelty can finally be broken. The film suggests that real strength comes from choosing forgiveness, and that message lands with surprising force, even more than the horror itself.

It really does feel like del Toro poured every gothic instinct he has into this movie. Which makes it even more tragic that local audiences do not get to see it in cinemas. This is a film built for a big screen, not just a quiet debut on Netflix.



Elordi as the creature, Frankenstein's monster made of discarded dead bodies.



Victor in his laboratory trying to create life from death. – ALL PICS FROM IMDB



Goth as Elizabeth, a smart young woman who is the object of affection of Victor and the creature.

## ALBUM REVIEW

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

# Lamp of Murmuur reignites

➤ Experimental spark returns on new album

**R**ESPLENDENT in post-punk and gothic ideations, Lamp of Murmuur (LOM) has returned with a fourth full-length album, as the band's singular member M. brings his project back to its experimental roots with *The Dreaming Prince in Ecstasy* after seemingly discarding it two years ago with *Saturnian Bloodstorm*.

An album that leaned heavily into *At the Heart of Winter*-era Immortal worship, *Saturnian Bloodstorm* raised a fair amount of eyebrows upon release.

Lacking what made previous LOM releases unique, the album certainly brewed up a bloodstorm of inane chatter over whether M. was done with his previous style of black metal

that reached soaring heights with 2021's *Submission and Slavery*.

Fast forward two years later, *The Dreaming Prince in Ecstasy* demonstrates that M. is still a force to be reckoned with, not just in the greater black metal circle, but even within the smaller pantheon of one-man black metal projects.

#### Sharpened black metal ideas

Consisting of nine tracks at almost an hour long, *The Dreaming Prince in Ecstasy* is nearly evenly split down the middle in terms of what M. attempts

to pull off, with "Side A" being a cross between traditional black metal and *Submission and Slavery*, while "Side B" is an entirely different beast.

The first side also shows how well M. paces his albums through the track arrangement, with intro *The Fires of Seduction* being a synth mirror that opens the door for *Forest of Hallucinations* to bring the synthesiser compositions to life with guitars and drums backed by his wet gravel vocals.

These are followed up by *Hategate (The Dream-Master's Realm)*, a

galloping cavalry of musical elements from all LOM albums put into one, complete with haunting clean vocals towards the end.

This side begins its curtain call with *Reincarnation of a Witch*, filled to the brim with LOM-signature earworm riffs that hit like a truck as M. snarls "Fallen/Come back to me/Fallen/Reincarnate, my Witch", before leading directly into the synth interlude *Angelic Vortex*.

#### Shaped by left-field turns

The most egregious shift on *The Dreaming Prince in Ecstasy* occurs on its "B Side". Told in three parts, the just-over 20-minute-long section is best summed up as the total culmination of the different techniques and styles that M. has employed throughout his demos, splits and full-length albums through the course of LOM's six years of existence.

Take *Pt. I - Moondance* for instance. For roughly four minutes, it is a dance of standard black metal fare mixed with M.'s inclination for melodic guitars, before it does a

sudden pirouette, bringing its other leg down and suddenly introducing Twin Tribes-esque clean singing which then leads into a guitar solo reminiscent to *Deformed Erotic Visage* on *Submission and Slavery*.

*Pt. II - Twilight Orgasm* and *Pt. III - The Fall* is the same. Each shows M. taking creative liberties in crafting different experiences for the penultimate finale to *The Dreaming Prince in Ecstasy*, such as how *Twilight Orgasm* is straight up a darkwave song with clean singing and atmospheric instrumental passages.

Having lost count of the many replays of the album it took for this review after the tenth spin, it is still hard to say whether *The Dreaming Prince in Ecstasy* comes close to the heights of *Submission and Slavery*, but the very notion that M. is bereft of ideas for LOM has at least been disproved here. Though there is no saying if he will revert to another *Saturnian Bloodstorm*, this album and the vision behind it has to be hailed nonetheless.



Like the music, the cover art for Lamp of Murmuur's albums continue to evolve.



Lamp of Murmuur's M. is based in Los Angeles, US.  
— PICS FROM INSTAGRAM @LAMPOFMURMUUR

## Exploring other side of happiness

**TAIWANESE** collective Night Keepers collaborated with Singaporean band Goose in new single *Happiness Hurts*.

The song will debut live during Night Keepers's first-ever headline show in Singapore at Wire Entertainment on Nov 23 where Goose will be joining as a performing guest.

A post-rock reinterpretation of Night Keepers's previous Mandarin single, *Happiness Hurts* explores the contrasts and struggles in life through layered guitar and ambient textures.

It reflects the idea that while we often assume happiness should heal sadness, sometimes happiness itself hurts.

The single offers listeners a sense of comfort and strength in the truth that joy and sorrow can exist side by side.

Night Keepers and Goose were first introduced to each other at the Clang Music

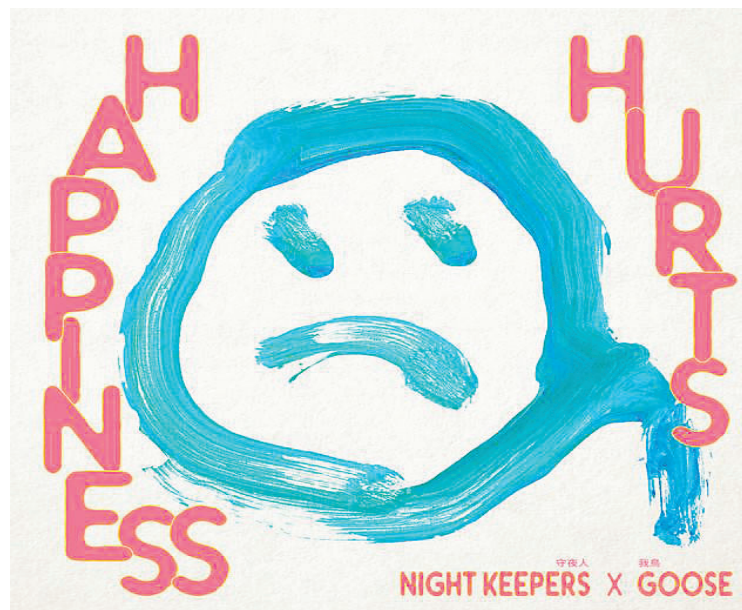
Festival in Singapore.

At the time, the members of Goose were in the audience watching Night Keepers's set and were deeply moved by the atmosphere it created.

After the show, Goose reached out to Night Keepers to share how it felt and to express its excitement about the possibility of working together in the future.

One of the members, WiFi had long admired Goose's music as well, but the right moment to collaborate had not come until *ge qu zai chuang ji hua (Songs recreation project)* which finally brought them together.

Goose shared: "We feel truly honoured and touched. Night Keepers's music carries a calming power, and meeting like-minded musicians to collaborate, especially discovering we share similar tastes, makes this connection feel particularly special to us."



The song will debut live during Night Keepers's first-ever headline show in Singapore at Wire Entertainment.



Kun says *What a Day* is about appreciating the simple, ordinary moments in life.

## Kun releases track *What a Day*

**KUN**, the multi-hyphenate singer, producer and fashion icon hailing from China, has released his new single *What a Day*.

The celebratory retro-soul pop groove was recorded live to tape, inspired by the joyous energy of his Los Angeles concert at The Fonda in August.

It continues his new era, which hears an evolution in his sound blending modern production with the timeless textures of classic soul and vintage rock, and showcasing his expansive vocal range with English lyrics.

*What a Day* is paired with a lavish music video evoking the behind the scenes of extravagant Old Hollywood musical sets.

The one-shot skilfully choreographed spectacle was filmed in London.

Kun said *What a Day* is about appreciating the simple, ordinary moments in life.

"We recorded the song to tape to capture the energy of the live band and nod to some of the great artistes who have shaped me. I want the listener to feel like they are in the studio with us."

The artiste made his international debut earlier this year with the release of *Deadman*, then he dropped funk-influenced romantic single *Jasmine* in the summer.

He was recently honoured as All-Round Artiste of the Year at Joox's Top Music Night in Bangkok and headlined the inaugural Bubbling & Boiling Festival in Singapore.

Beyond music, Kun has also expanded his fashion footprint through collaborations with Gentle Monster, where he appeared at its new concept outlet Haus Nowhere in Seoul, as well as Charlotte Tilbury's global makeup ambassador and Mugler Fragrances's global ambassador.

Recently, he attended Mugler's show at Paris Fashion Week, underscoring his status as an icon bridging music and style.



Kun is known for tracks such as *Deadman* and *Jasmine*.



From left: Harvey, Juria, Hinata, Jurin, Chisa, Cocona and Maya. – PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @XGOFFICIAL

# XG entering *The Core* era

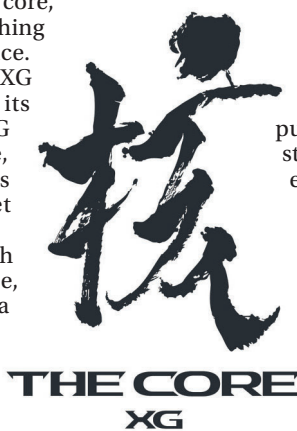
➤ Hip-hop, R&B girl group unveils title for first full-length album

**XG** revealed that its first full-length album is officially titled *The Core*. The hip-hop and R&B girl group ignited fan speculation after posting a mysterious image of the single kanji, which meant core, on Oct 30, hinting at something powerful beneath the surface.

The following day, XG unveiled the title of its upcoming world tour XG World Tour: *The Core*, connecting the dots for fans and setting the internet abuzz with theories.

Fans across Asia, North America, the UK and Europe, Australia, Latin America and beyond can now get ready – XG is bringing *The Core* to the world, kicking off in Japan in February next year.

First teased at Japan's



Album artwork.

largest summer festival A-Nation on Aug 30, the album has been one of the group's most anticipated projects since the release of its digital single *Gala* in September.

After weeks of silence, the official title reveal marked a major turning point in the countdown to XG's new era.

*The Core* represents XG at its purest – a sonic declaration that strips away excess to reveal the essence of who it is.

The album dives deep into the root of its music and identity, weaving a story that transcends genre, time and space.

It embodies the concept of X-pop, the genre XG has built and defined for itself, powered by unshakeable belief in its artistry.

Guided by the idea "great music holds value in and of



XG comprises seven members.

itself", the album reflects XG's evolution and the energy at the heart of its creativity – a bold step into the limitless future it is carving out.

## KmonRafiq drops single *Printer*

**THE** electronic meta-pop duo KmonRafiq is back with its brand new single *Printer*, an ambitious track that not only leads the way to its new album but also acts as its narrative. KmonRafiq – made up of solo artistes Kmonvish Lawan and Rafiq Ridzwan – are basing its entire album on an actual, mysterious, unfinished self-help manuscript that Rafiq found in his attic.

The duo genuinely have no idea who wrote the original *Book of Moderation*.

The band decided to take on the project of turning each chapter of the manuscript into a new song, and *Printer* is the next instalment in this musical journey.

More than just a song, *Printer* is a dramatic, meta-pop journey that dives right into the heart of the album's concept.

KmonRafiq has revealed that the

track serves as the introduction and the ending to the entire *Book of Moderation* narrative. The song begins with the secretive discovery of the manuscript.

The track's unique structure poses the main question the album aims to answer: What happens between finding the mysterious manuscript and getting arrested for it?

The subsequent songs on *Book of Moderation* will explore the trials, tribulations and unexpected consequences of trying to turn an unfinished, possibly dangerous, self-help guide into an artistic endeavour.

*Printer* is its sixth single release (excluding the Best Friend Remix EP *Peace of Mind Express*), following tracks such as the electronic meta-pop piece *Up and Down*, *Ugly Love*, *Tired but Moving*, *Best Friend* and *Reincarnate*.



KmonRafiq is made up of solo artistes Kmonvish and Rafiq.



# Strange seismic fight looms

## Former champion AJ to face YouTuber-turned-boxer Paul in December

BY ALEX PATTLE



**A**NTHONY JOSHUA (pic) will fight Jake Paul in a strange but seismic boxing match on Netflix, it has been confirmed.

On Friday Dec 19, heavyweight star Joshua will fight the *YouTuber*-turned-boxer at Miami's Kaseya Center.

The bout will not be an exhibition but rather a professional contest, meaning the result will go on each man's record and a knockout is possible.

However, the heavyweight fight is scheduled for eight three-minute rounds, making it shorter than most main-event matches on the men's side of the sport, and Joshua will be capped at 245lb.

Still, each man will wear 10oz gloves rather than any larger, more forgiving pairs.

Joshua vs Paul is an example of some of the most-unexpected matchmaking in boxing history, with 36-year-old Joshua a former two-time world heavyweight champion, while Paul, 28, made his name on *YouTube* and the *Disney Channel* before establishing a boxing career.

"Jake or anyone can get this work, no mercy," said Joshua in a press release. "I took some time out and I'm coming back with a mega show."

"It's a big opportunity for me. Whether you like it or not, I'm here to do massive numbers, have big fights and break every record while keeping cool, calm and collected."

"Mark my words, you'll see a lot more fighters take these opportunities in the future. I'm about to break the internet over Jake Paul's face."

"This isn't an AI simulation, this is Judgment Day," said Paul. "A professional heavyweight fight against an elite world champion in his prime."

"When I beat Anthony Joshua, every doubt disappears, and no one can deny me the opportunity to fight for a world title."

"To all my haters, this is what you wanted. To the people of the United Kingdom, I am sorry."

"On Friday Dec 19, under the lights in Miami, live globally only on *Netflix*, the torch gets passed and Britain's Goliath gets put to sleep."

Joshua's record stands at 28-4 (25 KO wins), and the Briton has beaten the likes of Wladimir Klitschko, Dillian Whyte, Joseph Parker, Alexander Povetkin and Kubrat Pulev, while also facing Oleksandr Usyk and Daniel Dubois at the elite level.

Meanwhile, Paul is 12-1 (7 KO wins) as a professional. The American has defeated - among others - former boxing world champion Julio Cesar Chavez Jr, former UFC champions Tyrone Woodley and Anderson Silva, and heavyweight boxing icon Mike Tyson.

Paul went the distance with Tyson, 58 at the time, in November 2024 and won on points in a highly-controversial fight, which played out across eight two-minute rounds. Paul typically fights at cruiserweight but faced Tyson at heavyweight.

Joshua has not fought since September 2024, when he was knocked out by Dubois at Wembley Stadium, suffering four knockdowns en route to defeat - the fourth loss of his career and second by stoppage.

The British public continues to await a generational showdown between Joshua and Tyson Fury, 37, whose half-brother Tommy is the only fighter to have beaten Paul.

Joshua vs Fury is being targeted for early 2026, according to AJ's promoter Eddie Hearn. In an interesting move, the fight against Paul sees Joshua veer from his usual broadcaster DAZN to compete on *Netflix*. - The Independent

302 Jobs



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322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 and IN THE MATTER OF KOK'S CLINIC FOR WOMEN SDN. BHD. Registration No. 198201001964 (81710-D) (In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

At a General Meeting of the Company duly convened and held at Wisma Goshen, 2nd Floor, 60, 62 & 64, Jalan SS 22/21, Damansara Jaya, 47400 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan on Wednesday, 12 November 2025, the following special resolutions were duly passed:-

1. That, the Company will be liquidated by way of Members' Voluntary Winding Up.
2. That, Ms. Lam Lee San and Ms. Lee Yee Ching both of Wisma Goshen, 2nd Floor, 60, 62 & 64, Jalan SS 22/21, Damansara Jaya, 47400 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan be appointed as Liquidators to act for the purpose of winding-up the Company's affairs and distributing its assets.
3. That, the said Liquidators be authorised to divide amongst the members in specie or kind, the whole or any part of the assets of the Company and may, for such purpose, set such value as they deem fair upon any property to be divided as aforesaid and may determine how such division shall be carried out as between the members.

Dr. Kok Tack Sang  
Director

Dated this 19th day of November, 2025

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 and IN THE MATTER OF KOK'S CLINIC FOR WOMEN SDN. BHD. Registration No. 198201001964 (81710-D) (In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of the above Company are required to send in their names and addresses and the particulars of their debts or claims and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any), to the undersigned (the Liquidators of the said Company) at the belowmentioned address by 5.00 p.m. on 19th day of December, 2025:-

c/o Norvic Corporate Services Sdn. Bhd. Reg. No. 200201033104 (600769-D) Wisma Goshen, 2nd Floor, 60, 62 & 64 Jalan SS 22/21 Damansara Jaya 47400 Petaling Jaya Selangor Darul Ehsan

The creditors (either through their solicitors or personally) who do not file their debts and claims on or before the specified date and time above will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made by Liquidators.

Lam Lee San (f)  
Lee Yee Ching (f)  
Liquidators

Dated this 19th day of November, 2025

IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT KUALA LUMPUR IN THE FEDERAL TERRITORY OF KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA (COMMERCIAL DIVISION) COMPANIES (WINDING-UP) NO: WA-28NCC-1033-10/2025

In the matter of Serta Properties Sdn Bhd [Company No.: 197701002920 (33891-T)];

And

In the matter of Sections 464(1) (b), 465(1)(e) and 466(1)(a) of the Companies Act, 2016.

BETWEEN

WISMA COSWAY MANAGEMENT CORPORATION [Strata Registration No: 1152] ... Petitioner

AND

SERTA PROPERTIES SDN BHD [Company No.: 197701002920 (33891-T)] ... Respondent

### ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION

NOTICE is hereby given that a Petition for the Winding-up of the abovenamed Company by the High Court, was on the 1st October 2025 presented by Wisma Cosway Management Corporation [Strata Registration No: 1152] of Lot 1.12-1.13, 1st Floor, Wisma Cosway, 88 Jalan Raja Chulan, 50200 Kuala Lumpur, the above said Petitioner and the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Court sitting at High Court of Malaya at Kuala Lumpur at 9.00 a.m. on the 2nd December 2025; and any creditor or contributory of the said Company desiring to support or oppose the making of an order on the said Petition may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his Counsel for that purpose and a copy of the Petition will be furnished to any creditor or contributory of the said company requiring the same by the undersigned on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

The Petitioner's address is at Lot 1.12-1.13, 1st Floor, Wisma Cosway, 88 Jalan Raja Chulan, 50200 Kuala Lumpur.

The Petitioner's solicitors are Messrs Mastura Partnership, address is at K-5-3, Solaris Mont Kiara, Jalan Solaris Mont Kiara, 50480 Kuala Lumpur.

Dated this 18th November 2025

TT

MESSRS MASTURA PARTNERSHIP  
Solicitors for the Petitioner

NOTE:- Any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the said Petition must serve on or send by post to the abovenamed Solicitors, for the Petitioner notice in writing of his intention so to do. The notice must state the name and address of the person, or if a firm, the name and address of the firm and must be signed by the person or firm, or his or their Solicitors (if any) and must be served, or, if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the abovenamed not later than twelve(12) o'clock noon of the 1st December 2025.

[Ref: 30.09.1388.22 WCMC-Serta (WU)]

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 and IN THE MATTER OF SECURE LOGISTICS & WAREHOUSING SDN. BHD. Registration No. 200201019009 (586672-X) (In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

At a General Meeting of the Company duly convened and held at Wisma Goshen, 2nd Floor, 60, 62 & 64, Jalan SS 22/21, Damansara Jaya, 47400 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan on Wednesday, 12th November 2025, the following special resolutions were duly passed:-

1. That, the Company will be liquidated by way of Members' Voluntary Winding Up.
2. That, Mr. Ng Mun Fung of Wisma Goshen, 2nd Floor, 60, 62 & 64, Jalan SS 22/21, Damansara Jaya, 47400 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan be appointed as Liquidator to act for the purpose of winding-up the Company's affairs and distributing its assets.
3. That, the said Liquidator be authorised to divide amongst the members in specie or kind, the whole or any part of the assets of the Company and may, for such purpose, set such value as they deem fair upon any property to be divided as aforesaid and may determine how such division shall be carried out as between the members.

Wong Yoon May (f)  
Director

Dated this 19th November 2025

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 and IN THE MATTER OF SECURE LOGISTICS & WAREHOUSING SDN. BHD. Registration No. 200201019009 (586672-X) (In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of the above Company are required to send in their names and addresses and the particulars of their debts or claims and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any), to the undersigned (the Liquidator of the said Company) at the belowmentioned address by 5.00 p.m. on 19th December 2025:-

c/o Norvic Corporate Services Sdn. Bhd. Reg. No. 200201033104 (600769-D) Wisma Goshen, 2nd Floor, 60, 62 & 64 Jalan SS 22/21 Damansara Jaya 47400 Petaling Jaya Selangor Darul Ehsan

The creditors (either through their solicitors or personally) who do not file their debts and claims on or before the specified date and time above will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made.

Ng Mun Fung  
Liquidator

Dated this 19th November 2025

IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT IPOH IN THE STATE OF PERAK DARUL RIDZUAN, MALAYSIA COMPANIES WINDING-UP NO: AA-28NCC-86-10/2025

In the Matter of Section 465(1)(e) & 466(1) (a) of the Companies Act 2016

And

In the Matter of GLOBAL MIX INDUSTRIES SDN BHD (REGISTRATION NO.: 201201042366 (1026842-W))

Between

S CONTROL ENGINEERING SDN BHD (REGISTRATION NO.: 200701009546 (767548-U)) ... Petitioner

And

GLOBAL MIX INDUSTRIES SDN BHD (REGISTRATION NO.: 201201042366 (1026842-W)) ... Respondent

### ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION

NOTICE is hereby given that a Petition for the Winding-up of the abovenamed Company by the High Court Malaya at Ipoh was on the 30th October 2025 presented to the said Court by S CONTROL ENGINEERING SDN BHD (Registration No.: 200701009546 (767548-U)), a company incorporated in Malaysia under the Companies Act 1965 and having its address for service at Unit B-03-08 (Mezzanine Floor), Kompleks Perindustrian Enhub, Persiaran Surian, Seksyen 3, Taman Sains Selangor, Kota Damansara, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor and that the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Court sitting at Ipoh on the 19th January 2026 at 9.00 a.m. in the morning and any Creditor or Contributory of the said Company desiring to support or oppose the making of an Order on the said Petition may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his Counsel for that purpose and a copy of the Petition will be furnished to any Creditor or Contributory of the said Company requiring the same by the undersigned on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

The Petitioner's address is at Unit B-03-08 (Mezzanine Floor), Kompleks Perindustrian Enhub, Persiaran Surian, Seksyen 3, Taman Sains Selangor, Kota Damansara, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.

The Petitioner's Solicitors are Messrs Aaron KC Ng & Partners, A-3-02, Kelana Square, No. 17, Jalan SS7/26, Kelana Jaya, 47301 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

Dated the 11th day of November 2025

.....f.....  
Solicitors for the Petitioner

Note - any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the said Petition must serve on or send by post to the abovenamed Messrs Aaron KC Ng & Partners, notice in writing of his intention to do so. The notice must state the name and address of the person, or, in a firm, the name and address of the firm and must be signed by the person or firm of his or their solicitor (if any) and must be served or, if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the abovenamed not later than 12.00 o'clock in the forenoon of the 18th January 2026.

This Advertisement of Petition is filed by Messrs Aaron KC Ng & Partners, Solicitors for the Petitioner abovenamed whose address for service is at A-3-02, Kelana Square, No. 17, Jalan SS7/26, Kelana Jaya, 47301 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.  
No. Tel: 03-7880 2388/2389/7625 2388  
No. Faks: 03-7625 5388  
Ref : AKC/SC-GMI/11201/2023(AL/FKM)

322 Notices

IN THE HIGH COURT AT SHAH ALAM IN THE STATE OF SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN, MALAYSIA  
ORIGINATING SUMMONS NO.: BA-28JM-18-10/2025

In the matter of Technogroup Holdings (M) Sdn. Bhd. [Company No.: 1202099-P]

And

In the matter of Proposals on Judicial Management and the Appointment of a Judicial Manager under Sections 404, 405, 406, 407, 410, and 414 of the Companies Act 2016;

And

In the matter of Companies (Corporate Rescue Mechanism) Rules 2018;

And

In the matter of Rule 7 and 28 of the Rules of Court 2012

And

In the Inherent Jurisdiction of the Court

TECHNOGROUP HOLDINGS (M) SDN. BHD. (Company No: 1202099-P) ... APPLICANT

NOTICE OF THE APPLICATION FOR JUDICIAL MANAGEMENT ORDER (Rule 11 of Companies (Corporate Rescue Mechanism) Rules 2018)

1. Notice is hereby given that an application for placing the abovenamed company under the judicial management of a judicial manager by the Court has been filed on the 24th day of October 2025 by the company.

2. The said application is directed to be heard before the Court at 9:30 a.m. on the 08th day of December 2025, and Dato Shammughanathan A/L Vellanthurai (No. KP: 660204-71-5037) of No. 59, Jalan Thambyilay, (Licquidation License No.: 01870/07/2024 P) from SC Corporate Recovery Sdn Bhd (Company No.: 558569-D) Brickfields, 50470 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia has been nominated as the judicial manager.

3. Any person who intends to oppose the making of a judicial management order under section 405 of the Companies Act 2016 may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his counsel for that purpose.

4. A copy of the application and its supporting affidavit will be furnished to any creditor or member of the company requiring the copy of the application and its supporting affidavit from the applicant upon payment of the charge as specified in Rule 12 of the Companies (Corporate Rescue Mechanism) Rules 2018.

5. The applicant's address is, No. 33, Jalan Flora 2/1, Bandar Rimba Raya, 42500 Telok Penglima Garang, Selangor.

6. The applicant's solicitor is Messrs. Nekoo of Suite 8-15-3, Menara Mutiara Bangsar, Jalan Liku, Bangsar, 51900 Kuala Lumpur.

Dated this day of 2025.  
sgd  
Messrs. NEKOO  
Solicitor for the Applicant

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Note:  
(a) Any person who intends to appear at the hearing of the application must serve on the Applicant or his solicitor a notice in writing of his intention to appear.  
(b) The notice of intention to appear must be served, either personally or by post, not later than twelve noon of the 07th day of December 2025.

# Ashes on their minds

*England ready to shake off weight of failure*

**R**ECENT history will weigh heavily on the shoulders of England's players when they take the field in Perth on Friday seeking to end a lamentable run of Ashes failure in Australia.

They have lost 13 of their previous 15 Test matches Down Under, drawing the other two, and you must go all the way back to 2011 for the last England victory.

Confident noises are coming out of England's camp, though, and whether or not Brendon McCullum's side can turn the tide, one thing is for sure, the touring side will not die wondering.

England have resembled lambs to the slaughter in their last three away Ashes series, losing the tactical and psychological battles and having technical frailties ruthlessly exposed.

This time, however, under inspirational captain Ben Stokes they look set to fight fire with fire.

Pace-bowling greats James Anderson and Stuart Broad may have left the stage but England boast six fast bowlers capable of denting the toughest Australian armour, top-order bats-

men who can score at dizzying rates and a century-hungry Joe Root freed from the shackles of being captain.

"It's going to be hard. But if they get everything right, I look at this and go, actually, England can definitely win the series without a shadow of a doubt," said Alastair Cook, player of the series when England last won in Australia in 2010-11.

"The way this England side plays, they've got a really good chance."

The fearless front-foot approach that coach McCullum and captain Stokes have ingrained in England has produced 25 wins, 14 defeats and only two draws in 41 Tests.

So-called "Bazball" produced fireworks and acrimony in equal measure two years ago in England when Australia retained the Ashes with a 2-2 draw having won the opening two matches.

At times, Australia were knocked off the rails by England's full-gas approach, but critics accused the hosts of being architects of their own downfall, especially a frenzied day one of the first Test when Stokes declared on 393-

8 with Root unbeaten on 118 and Australia won the match by two wickets.

With the weapons at his disposal, McCullum is unlikely to tone down his team's cavalier approach, but former England fast bowler Steven Finn reckons Bazball will be used selectively to stop the Australians dictating terms.

"I don't like the term Bazball," Finn, another member of the 2010-11 squad, told *Reuters*.

"But I think that the manner in which they play is part of the reason why I think they've got their best chance in 15 years of regaining the Ashes Down Under, because in 2010/11 when we went down there and won, we pushed back against Australia.

"When Australia are on top, you need to be able to push back rather than just fall like a pack of cards as happened in the last three series down there.

"There's this Australian media rhetoric about (Bazball) being arrogant. I actually think the Aussie public will respect it as a team playing positively to try and force results." - *Reuters*



Australia's Pat Cummins (front row, 2nd right) and teammates pose for photos after drawing the series and retaining the Ashes against England at the Oval in London on July 31, 2023. - *REUTERS FILEPIC*

## Aussies reliant on ageing team

**AUSTRALIA** are favourites to retain the Ashes over the next two months but anything short of their usual dominance over England on home soil is sure to reignite the debate over the pace of transition to a younger generation.

Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Nathan Lyon, Steve Smith, Usman Khawaja and Travis Head are all in their mid to late 30s and form the core of the team bidding to keep hold of the urn for another 18 months.

It would be a surprise, however, if all seven were still around when Australia tour South Africa next September, let alone when the Ashes rivalry resumes in England in 2027.

That so many have reached such an advanced stage of their careers without obvious replacements is certainly a reflection of their quality, but will be a matter of concern in the case of more injuries during the series.

"No doubt, (the selectors) are conscious they have half a dozen or so guys coming pretty close to the end of their careers," former captain Greg Chappell said.

"It's a matter of having the replacements available, that's the difficult part of it."

Another former captain, Steve Waugh, launched a shot at George Bailey in the run-up to the Ashes, accusing the head selector of failing to take tough decisions and allowing senior players to pick the side.

"You just want to make sure that three or four players don't go out at the same time. That leaves a big hole in the team," he said.

"So they've got to just make sure that it is a transition, but not all at once."

Australia's fast bowling stocks will definitely be tested in the series opener with skipper Cummins and Hazlewood - both members of the triumvirate that has kept Australia near the top of the test world rankings for a decade - absent injured.

Scott Boland, 36, will win his 15th cap bowling with 35-year-old Starc in Perth, while Brendan Doggett looks set to earn his first at the age of 31, the only quick to debut for Australia since 2021.

It was at the top of the batting order that Waugh's criticism was mainly aimed,

however, with the suggestion the job of identifying a successor to David Warner, who retired from Tests in January last year, had been botched.

Usman Khawaja, who will be 39 during the series, remains a lock-in as one opener despite diminishing returns from a career that started in the last test England won on Australian soil in 2011.

Youngsters Sam Konstas and Nathan McSweeney have been tried and discarded for now, and it looks like the uncapped Jake Weatherald or 31-year-old Marnus Labuschagne will walk out with Khawaja in Perth.

Chappell, who is optimistic about the talent emerging in Australia, thinks players need to be given time to prove themselves at test level.

"There is nobody that's ever been a Test-ready player straight out of domestic cricket," he said.

"Domestic cricket is where you identify yourself as someone who's got a chance and then if you're selected, you get to find out whether you're good enough to make that next step and take those challenges." - *Reuters*

## Five great Test series

**ENGLAND** and Australia begin the latest edition of the Ashes in Perth on Friday with the visitors looking to wrestle back the urn for the first time since 2015.

Here's a look at five of the most memorable series between cricket's oldest enemies, a rivalry which stretches back to 1882:

### 2019: Stokes heroics, brilliant Smith

Australia retained the Ashes as holders despite the series being drawn for the first time since 1972, with Steve Smith grabbing headlines on his return from a ball-tampering ban by excelling in the face of taunting English crowds.

He batted on a different level to everybody else, scoring 774 runs in just seven innings at an average of more than 110, including back-to-back centuries in the opening Test at Edgbaston.

But the highlight of the series was England's phenomenal Ben Stokes-inspired win in the third Test at Headingley.

With just one wicket remaining and 73 runs needed, Stokes protected tailender Jack Leach to steer his side to 362-9, their highest successful run chase in Tests, with a memorable unbeaten 135.

### 2005: England win thriller

The 2005 Ashes was one of the greatest series in cricket history and saw England triumph over their fiercest rivals for the first time in nearly 19 years.

It appeared to be business as usual for long-suffering England fans when Australia won the first Test at Lord's by 239 runs.

But when Australia fast bowler Glenn McGrath was ruled out of the second Test at Edgbaston, England took charge.

England's Andrew Flintoff starred with both bat and ball and when Australia were 175-8, chasing 282 for victory, a home win looked assured.

But Australia edged their way closer before last man Michael Kasprovicz was caught behind off Steve Harmison to give England victory by a mere two runs.

The third Test was drawn and England survived a brilliant four-wicket burst from leg-spin great Shane Warne to win the fourth Test at Trent Bridge.

England, now 2-1 up and needing to avoid defeat in the fifth Test to regain the Ashes, were in danger of losing on the last day at the Oval until Kevin Pietersen's breathtaking 158 and a fine fifty from Ashley Giles rescued a draw.

### 1981: Botham's Ashes

Rarely has one man done as much to win an Ashes as Ian Botham in 1981. He started the series as England captain, but after defeat in the first Test at Nottingham and the embarrassment of bagging a pair in a draw at Lord's, Botham resigned as skipper.

England were in dire straits after being made to follow-on in the third Test at Headingley. Botham's astonishing counter-attack innings of 149 not out, however, meant Australia were set a target of 130 before fast bowler Bob Willis's inspired 8-43 saw England to an astounding 18-run win.

Botham's scarcely believable return of five for one in 28 balls at Edgbaston ensured England won the fourth Test by 29 runs.

There were more heroics in the fifth Test when Botham's blistering 118 set up a 103-run victory at Old Trafford to clinch the series 3-1.

### 1948: Australia's 'Invincibles'

An Australia side captained by Don Bradman in his final Test series swept all before them in an undefeated tour during which they won the Ashes 4-0.

Underlining their superiority, Australia were set a seemingly impossible target of 404 on the last day to win the fourth Test at Headingley. They got there for the loss of just three wickets, with Arthur Morris making 182 and Bradman an unbeaten 173.

### 1932/33: Bodyline barrage

The most controversial Ashes series of them all was brought about by a desire to curb Bradman's phenomenal run-scoring.

England captain Douglas Jardine's response was to deploy "leg theory" - bowling short to a packed leg-side field - with supremely accurate fast bowler Harold Larwood the spearhead of the attack.

It worked to the extent England won the series 4-1, with Bradman's average for the series reduced to 56.57

But the use of what became known as "Bodyline", which saw batsmen having to defend themselves rather than their stumps, was condemned as "unsporting" by Australian officials and almost provoked a breakdown in diplomatic relations.

## Poland snatch victory over Malta

**POLAND'S** Piotr Zielinski struck late to earn a 3-2 victory away to Malta yesterday but it was not enough to claim top spot in their World Cup qualifying group and they had to settle for a place in the playoffs for next year's finals.

Poland's win at Ta'Qali's National Stadium lifted them to 17 points in Group G, the second-place finish bringing a chance to book a ticket to North America via the playoffs in March.

The Netherlands claimed direct qualification as they finished top with 20 points after thrashing visiting Lithuania 4-0. Malta finished fourth with five points.

"In the first half, we played too statically, not only in defence but also in attack," said Poland captain Robert Lewandowski.

"We played the ball too slowly and couldn't get into the game at all. We left too much space for our opponents. A lot of things were missing. It wasn't our standard game, but we won anyway."

Poland broke the deadlock in the 31st minute when Lewandowski leapt up unmarked in the box to meet Zielinski's cross and headed into the corner.

Malta levelled four minutes later, punishing a

failed clearance from goalkeeper Bartłomiej Dragowski as Irvin Cardona reacted quickest in the six-yard box to tap the ball into the net.

Poland regained the lead in the 59th when Kurt Shaw's tackle on Lewandowski inadvertently redirected the ball into the path of Pawel Wszolek, who swept home his first international goal in almost 10 years.

The visitors appeared to have doubled their advantage when Karol Swiderski finished off a quick counter, but VAR ruled it out due to Jakub Kivior's foul on Cardona in the box at the other end.

The goal was overturned and a penalty awarded instead, with Teddy Teuma sending Dragowski the wrong way to bring Malta level again in the 68th minute.

Zielinski settled the contest five minutes from time, unleashing a low strike from distance that took a heavy deflection before skidding inside the far post.

"I hope that nothing will be missing in the playoffs and that luck will smile on us in the draw," the 37-year-old Lewandowski added. "I hope that in March we will be celebrating our qualification to the World Cup." – Reuters

## Koeman lauds potential, quality of squad

**NETHERLANDS** coach Ronald Koeman has lauded the potential of his squad after they secured a World Cup qualification yesterday but insisted they demand more from each other if they are to succeed at next year's finals.

He has high expectations for the tournament in Canada, Mexico, and the US, "because there's so much quality in this squad," he said following the 4-0 win over Lithuania that secured top place in their qualifying group.

"We simply have a great squad. There's a lot of competition, and you can see that again with the players coming on (as substitutes). These are difficult choices, because there's so much quality."

Competition in the squad is vital to try and bring the best out of all, he added.

"If we tighten our expectations on each other a little bit, to make each other even bigger, stronger, and better, then a lot is possible.

(Captain) Virgil (van Dijk) plays a role in that, Frenkie (de Jong) plays a role in that, Memphis (Depay) plays a role in that. That's the core of our team.

"Nathan (Ake), Denzel (Dumfries)... they're experienced guys who have been playing at the highest level for years and therefore know what's expected of them.

"When young players come in, you need leadership. And that can't always come from the coach," Koeman added.

"We talk about that regularly. We can and must improve on that, demanding even more from each other because if you don't believe there's more to it, there's no point."

He said there was enormous potential for the Dutch who now wait for next month's draw to see who they will face at the finals in June.

"This squad can play so well, so that's why it's sometimes difficult to accept that mistakes are made, because if you make those mistakes during a World Cup, you might just end up going home.

"And that would be a shame, because this is a great squad in terms of quality," he added. – Reuters



Lithuania's Artemijus Tutyskinas (2nd left) and Netherlands' Donyell Malen (2nd right) fight for the ball during their World Cup 2026 Group G European qualification match. – AFP/IC

## Oranje book finals berth

Dutch end qualifying campaign unbeaten with 20 points

**THREE-TIMES** World Cup runners-up the Netherlands secured their berth at the 2026 finals with an easy 4-0 home victory over Lithuania yesterday, finishing top of Group G.

The victory margin could have been even bigger, such was the Dutch dominance, but the result ensured they completed the campaign three points clear of second-placed Poland.

Tijjani Reijnders put the Netherlands 1-0 ahead at halftime before the hosts scored a rapid trio of goals in the second period from Cody Gakpo, Xavi Simons, and Donyell Malen.

The unbeaten Netherlands finished on 20 points, with Poland on 17 after they scraped a 3-2 win away to Malta.

Reijnders opened the scoring in the 16th minute as he turned sharply to finish off a pass from Frenkie de Jong.

He had been left out of the starting

side for the 1-1 draw against Poland in Warsaw on Friday, as Justin Kluivert was preferred in the attacking midfield role.

However, Kluivert was injured for yesterday's match, handing Reijnders a chance to remind everyone of his quality.

He almost had a second goal on the half-hour mark, bursting through the middle and hitting the post with a curling right-foot effort.

Three goals in a four-minute spell started fortuitously in the 58th minute when Gakpo converted a penalty awarded after a VAR check showed Artemijus Tutyskinas touched the ball with his fingertip as he went up in an aerial duel with Matthijs de Ligt.

Simons thrashed home the third goal on the hour mark, jockeying past two defenders before a powerful strike gave goalkeeper Edvinas Gertmonas no chance.

Two minutes after that, Malen broke from the halfway line on the counter-attack and showed a swift

turn of speed to outprint the chasing defenders and hammer home with his left foot.

"I think there were some good things in our performance," said playmaker De Jong. "Maybe we faded a bit, but the period after halftime was great for the crowd. Of course, you want to score as much as possible, and 4-0 is ultimately fine.

"Now the real work begins. We're going to improve as much as possible and arrive at the World Cup in the best possible shape," said the midfielder.

Defender De Ligt was delighted with his Oranje comeback after not starting for a full year.

The 25-year-old denied several call-ups from manager Ronald Koeman during a period with many struggles at Manchester United but 363 days after his last start for Oranje, De Ligt returned to the starting lineup yesterday.

"Whether it's a comeback? Yeah, a bit. I wasn't here last time, I haven't

started for a long time, so I'm delighted with today," De Ligt told reporters at the Johan Cruyff ArenA.

"The season is going well so far. I'm not sure if you call it a comeback season, but I'm feeling well, and it's going better with the club, and now I'm rewarded with a start, so that's great."

The Dutchman, who previously played for Ajax, Juventus, and Bayern Munich, was a young kid when the Netherlands last made a deep run in the World Cup.

"My best memory is the 2010 World Cup, when we reached the final. The country going bonkers, beating Brazil 2-1 – those types of games," said De Ligt, who preferred that World Cup over the one in 2014, when the Netherlands won the bronze medal.

"I preferred 2010; I was a little younger. I was 14 during the 2014 World Cup, but 2010 was the first time I saw the Netherlands go far in the tournament." – AFP/Agencies

## Parrott's heroics born from early struggles in English football

**TROY PARROTT'S** tearful celebration after his dramatic 96th-minute winner in a 3-2 win over Hungary that sent Ireland to the playoffs for next year's World Cup was the culmination of years of frustration in English football, the striker said.

An emotional Parrott was seen embracing his family and in tears following the win in Budapest.

The Irishman began his career in Tottenham Hotspur's academy, with brief loan spells at Millwall, Ipswich Town, MK Dons, Preston North End and Excelsior Rotterdam before moving to

AZ Alkmaar.

"I know playing in England didn't go so well and believe me, I really beat myself about it at the time," he told the BBC in an interview published yesterday.

"I feel the tough road I have had definitely played a part in last night. Moving to the Netherlands gave me a sense of being wanted, I felt appreciated and sometimes, for a player, that's all they need."

Parrott's hat-trick in the must-win game

against Hungary and his brace in a 2-0 shock win over Portugal last week took Ireland to 10 points as they finished in the second position in Group F.

"For all this to happen so perfectly at that time of the game, it must be written. Everything aligned perfectly," the 23-year-old said.

"It's a bit of good karma for us, because, as a team and a country, we have had a lot of bad karma."

Parrott said he was enjoying the reactions of

Irish fans, including a tribute from Dublin airport on social media in which they joked about renaming themselves after him.

"Yes, I saw the Dublin Airport thing – I'm loving all the stuff," he said.

"People are saying this is the best night they have ever had in their life so to be able to contribute to that is something I will never forget."

The playoffs will take place in March next year with the World Cup set to be held from June 11 to July 19 in North America. – Reuters

## O'Neill praises 'real quality' of Donley

BY IAN PARKER

**MICHAEL O'NEILL** hailed Jamie Donley's "real quality" after the 20-year-old's first international goal gave Northern Ireland a 1-0 win over Luxembourg in their final World Cup Group A qualifier.

Donley scored from the penalty spot in the 44th minute after Christopher Martins was punished for catching Ciaran Brown, and the on-loan Stoke forward had already seen one strike ruled out before then with Ethan Galbraith offside in the build-up.

In a much-changed Northern Ireland line-up, Donley's performance was a bright spot on a drab night at Windsor Park, where it was obvious little was riding on the game – the prospect of a top-two finish gone but a playoff place secured all the same.

"Jamie's a real player, real quality," O'Neill said. "I wanted to see him as a nine. There's no secret the nine is a problem position for us and I think Jamie has different attributes from some of the other strikers."

"I thought he did really well in the game. He's clever, his link-up play is good. He took the penalty well and you saw the finish for the goal that was disallowed. Ethan was offside, but you saw the quality that Jamie displayed in that moment."

Donley caught the eye while at Leyton Orient last

season, but this campaign has been more difficult with limited game time at Stoke, where he has made only six appearances so far.

"He's unfortunate that the loan he's on at the minute from Spurs to Stoke is not going as he would have planned and he's not been given many opportunities, but hopefully that situation resolves itself in January," O'Neill added.

"He's a really high technical level of player, a great left foot, real awareness and great vision, just a really good footballer – simple as that."

"I watched him at Orient last year in many games and thought he was the best player on the pitch. He's 20 years of age and he's got a lot ahead of him."

It was a subdued night at Windsor Park after hopes of a second-placed finish in the group was ended by Friday's 1-0 loss in Slovakia.

Despite a flat atmosphere, Northern Ireland got the job done to ensure they go into the playoff in March on the back of a win.

"We had to look at the game in its own right," O'Neill said.

"What happened the other night you have to put that behind you and we did that. The most important thing was to go and win the game." – The Independent

## Bowen ready to rival Foden, Palmer for World Cup spot

BY RICHARD JOLLY

**JARROD BOWEN** believes he is in competition with Cole Palmer and Phil Foden for a place in England's World Cup squad. The West Ham captain said he is trying to give manager Thomas Tuchel a selection headache but, with Bukayo Saka established as the first-choice right winger, Bowen sees a battle to get a spot on the plane next summer.

Noni Madueke, who excelled in September's wins over Andorra and Serbia, is also in contention and while Tuchel has talked about using Foden as a No. 9 or a No. 10, Bowen feels he could be a rival on the right.

"What I'm up against is Bukayo, Noni is injured for this camp, Cole Palmer, Phil Foden can all play there – you're talking about world-class, elite players and I'm in the same category as them," he said.

"Bukayo has proved it at international and club level. For me it's about keeping pushing myself and keep pushing Bukayo as well. Give the manager a headache and give Bukayo a

headache as well."

Bowen hopes his ability to play in several positions will count in his favour. Although he rarely plays on the left for his club, he spent some of Sunday's 2-0 win in Albania there after beginning on the right while he often operates as a centre-forward for West Ham.

"I am not going to stake my claim and say that I am better than Harry Kane," he added. "They are big shoes to fill. But that is one thing about me, my versatility."

"I was played out the left for 20 minutes when Bukayo came on. The manager has noticed that about me. He has noticed that hunger, that drive that wherever it is on the pitch, I will run. Maybe not leftback or rightback as that would be a little more confusing but anywhere across the front line I am comfortable playing."

Bowen said he has had to fight off an inferiority complex to believe he belongs on the international stage.

He began his career in non-league football and is now dreaming of going to the World Cup. – The Independent

## Achtung!

Germany 'send message' with Slovakia rout

**GERMANY** captain Joshua Kimmich said his side "wanted to send a message" with yesterday's 6-0 thumping of Slovakia in Leipzig which sealed their progress to the 2026 World Cup.

Leroy Sane struck twice and Nick Woltemade scored for the third straight Germany.

The win put Germany through atop Group A and into next year's tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Slovakia finished second and will go into a playoff.

"Everyone wanted to send a message today. Everyone knew what was at stake," Kimmich told Germany's ZDF.

"In Germany, we're not used to it being difficult to qualify – that's why I'm very happy with how we played."

Germany have laboured past underdog opponents in this campaign but were 4-0 up at half-time and humming in Leipzig.

Woltemade continued his golden run with the opening goal after 18 minutes. Serge Gnabry added the second 11 minutes later.

Under pressure Liverpool midfielder Florian Wirtz sparked to life late in the first half, laying on two goals for Sane in five minutes.

Ridle Baku and debutant Assan Ouedraogo scored in the second half.

Germany's win also guarantees the four-time World Cup winners a high seeding that should protect them from an early clash with another of the tournament's big guns.

"Every player played well today and worked like a dog," coach Julian Nagelsmann said.

"We showed incredible team spirit and pushed ourselves on the pitch from the very beginning."

The nature of Germany's fifth straight victory puts a glowing finish on a solid but unimpressive qualifying campaign.

Germany have been efficient but rarely impressive and needed to avoid defeat on Monday to top their group and qualify directly.

Slovakia had dominated Germany to win 2-0 in the reverse fixture, their first ever competitive victory over the



Germany's Nick Woltemade (top, left) and Slovakia's David Hancko (top, right) vie for the ball during their 2026 World Cup European qualification Group A match yesterday. – AFP/PIIC

European giants.

Nagelsmann will be buoyed by the performance under pressure while several injured starters will make their way back in the coming months, including Kai Havertz, Jamal Musiala, Antonio Rudiger and Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

The Germans helped quell the butterflies when Woltemade headed in to break through with 18 minutes gone.

The strike meant the Newcastle striker had scored Germany's past four goals over three games.

After Slovakia's Michal Duris forced a fingertip save from Germany's Oliver Baumann, Gnabry put the fans in party mood with 29 minutes gone, guiding the ball home to double Germany's lead.

Wirtz then found Sane with two pinpoint passes to put Germany four up at the break.

Nagelsmann took off captain Kimmich with Germany well in control and his replacement Baku had an

immediate impact, blasting in a Gnabry pass two minutes after coming on.

The Germany coach bought on teenager Ouedraogo with 15 minutes remaining and the RB Leipzig midfielder added a goal and celebrated in front of his home fans.

Nagelsmann praised Kimmich's performance and grit despite not being fully recovered from a capsule injury in his right ankle that forced him to miss the game against Luxembourg.

"He's very valuable to us," acknowledged Nagelsmann. "He has a lot of experience at this level and played many such games."

"He's one of the best crossers of the ball in Europe, we saw that in the first goal, which was very important."

"He worked hard and had a good performance like everyone else. He still had a bit of pain, but he always gives everything for the national team and for his club. That's why he's our captain." – AFP/Agencies

## Woltemade hopes to make his mark

**NICK WOLTEMADE** said he hoped to have done enough to book his 2026 World Cup spot after scoring again in Germany's 6-0 win over Slovakia in Leipzig yesterday.

"We're relieved. It's a great moment," Woltemade said. "I'm playing, I'm scoring goals and I'm hopefully playing at the World Cup."

The Newcastle striker opened the scoring on Monday, with Leroy Sane bagging a brace and Serge Gnabry, Ridle Baku and Assan Ouedraogo all getting on the scoresheet.

Woltemade, 23, has four goals in his past three Germany games, including the winners against Northern Ireland and Luxembourg.

Sitting on the bench at Werder Bremen 18 months ago, Woltemade made his international debut in June.

With Germany missing several

attackers including Kai Havertz, Jamal Musiala, Tim Kleindienst and Niclas Füllkrug, Woltemade has made himself indispensable to coach Julian Nagelsmann.

"I find it hard to explain, it's always great to be able to play for Germany," he told ZDF.

"I went through all the youth teams, and now I'm with the senior team."

The performance was the latest in the rapid rise for the 1.98m tall striker, who moved from Stuttgart to Premier League side Newcastle in summer for a reported fee of €75 million (RM375m).

"For many of us, it'll be our first World Cup," Nagelsmann told reporters. "For me, it's the first. It's a very meaningful tournament in football and I'm looking forward to it." – AFP

## BRIEFS

## FAM to take case to CAS

**THE** Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) will begin the process of taking the case regarding the eligibility of their seven heritage players to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). FAM acting president Datuk Mohd Yusoff Mahadi said this is to ensure justice is upheld and to defend the integrity of the players' eligibility process as stipulated by the government and the relevant authorities. "FAM would like to state that we have received the full written reasoning behind Fifa's decision to reject the association's appeal in connection with the eligibility of the seven heritage players. "FAM remain committed to defending the rights of players who are eligible to represent the country, and will ensure that every action is taken professionally, transparently and in accordance with appropriate legal channels," he posted on FAM's Facebook page yesterday.

## BAM open joint training session

**THE** Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) are open to the proposal by the Road to Gold (RTG) Committee for the national shuttlers to train together with their professional counterparts. BAM secretary-general Datuk Kenny Goh said the proposal had been brought before the association previously, but admitted that it still requires further scrutiny. "We need to discuss with the coaches here and also perhaps with Datuk Stuart Ramalingam (the RTG coordinator) to see in detail what is meant by joint training," he said when met at Akademi Badminton Malaysia in Bukit Kiara, yesterday. On Monday, Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh said that the RTG Committee had proposed that players under the auspices of the BAM train together with professional shuttlers starting from early next year. Kenny said the proposal by the RTG Committee is not a new thing, as both the BAM and professional shuttlers have trained together during the Covid-19 pandemic. He, however, acknowledged that the proposal could prove beneficial for the sport in the country.

## Zii Jia ends 2025 season

**AFTER** a challenging year, professional men's singles shuttler Lee Zii Jia has announced that he will be using the remainder of the year to focus on recovery and preparation for the 2026 season. Zii Jia, who has been out of action since September, reflected on the ups and downs of the year, particularly a learning curve when it comes to managing his physical health. "There are days when I feel on top of the world and there are days when I feel the effects of coming back from that ankle injury and the nagging back pain. Since my last competitive match at the China Masters in September, my team and I have been working closely with medical experts on how to best move forward in ensuring that I am able to compete to the best of my abilities," he said posted on Instagram. Zii Jia's team had announced that the shuttler was advised by a medical expert to undergo an extensive rehabilitation programme for persistent low back pain after he pulled out of the third game against Taiwan's Lin Chun-Yi in the opening round of the China Masters 2025.

# Further scrutiny needed over forgery

**THE** Fifa Appeal Committee has instructed its secretariat to take immediate steps to launch a formal investigation into the internal operations of the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) over the falsification of documents of seven heritage players.

According to the 63-page motivated decision released by the world football governing body yesterday, the investigation should aim to identify the individuals responsible for the falsification of documents.

The probe should also assess the adequacy and effectiveness of FAM's internal compliance and governance mechanisms, as well as determine whether additional disciplinary measures are warranted against FAM officials.

"As an initial focus, the investigation must examine the role of the FAM secretary-general (Datuk Noor Azman Rahman) and that of the two licensed Fifa agents named in these proceedings - Nicolas Puppo and Frederico Moraes.

"Their involvement raises serious concerns that merit thorough scrutiny," it said.

The committee also instructed its secretariat to

initiate a separate investigation into the fielding of ineligible players in the three friendly matches cited in the case.

The Fifa Appeal Committee said that the inquiry will establish the circumstances under which some of the players participated and whether further sanctions are appropriate, while also revealing that all seven heritage players were born abroad.

It said that Gabriel Felipe Arrocha was born in Santa Cruz de la Palma, Spain; Facundo Garces (Santa Fe, Argentina); Rodrigo Holgado (Buenos Aires, Argentina); Imanol Manchuca (Rosario, Argentina); Joao Figueiredo (Sao Paulo, Brazil); Jon Irazabal (Bilbao, Spain) and Hector Hevel (Leidschendam, the Netherlands).

In the meantime, given the nature and gravity of the offences - particularly the forgery of official documents - the committee directed the secretariat to adopt the necessary steps to notify the competent criminal authorities in Brazil, Argentina, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia.

"Forgery constitutes a criminal offence in these jurisdictions, and it is imperative that the relevant authorities are informed so that appropriate crimi-

## Fifa appeal panel orders formal probe into FAM's internal operations

nal investigations and proceedings may be pursued," it said.

On Nov 3, Fifa rejected appeals by FAM and the seven naturalised players.

The Fifa Appeal Committee upheld the penalty imposed by the Disciplinary Committee of the governing body against FAM and the seven naturalised players for offences related to the falsification of documents under Article 22 of the Fifa Disciplinary Code.

In its previous statement, Fifa said FAM had submitted falsified documents to confirm the eligibility of the players, allowing them to compete in the third-round match of the 2027 Asian Cup Qualifiers against Vietnam on June 10, which Malaysia won 4-0 at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

Previously, the Secretariat was able to gather a copy of the original birth certificates of the grandmother or grandfather of the players involved.

Consequently, FAM was ordered to pay a fine of CHF350,000 (RM1.8 million), while each player was fined CHF2,000 (RM11,000). The seven players were also suspended for 12 months from football-related activities. - Bernama



**THE** seven national heritage footballers have admitted that their claim to Malaysian ancestry is generally based on family hearsay rather than verified records, according to the 63-page motivated decision released by world governing body Fifa yesterday.

The players involved are Gabriel Felipe Arrocha, Facundo Garces, Rodrigo Holgado, Imanol Manchuca, Joao Figueiredo, Jon Irazabal and Hector Hevel.

Based on the motivated decision, the players stated that they never read, checked or in any way verified any of the documents they submitted, emphasising in their written submissions that the documents were authentic and unaltered at the time they were given to their respective agents.

The Fifa Appeal Committee added that the players also argued that any manipulation occurred after the documents were handed over to the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) and without their knowledge or involvement.

"Except for player 1 (Gabriel Felipe Arrocha), who handed over the documents in person and has not produced a copy in the proceedings, the other players filed screenshots and WhatsApp con-

versations with their agents as evidence.

"These depict birth certificates of their grandparents, none of which lists a place of birth in Malaysia (or its territories)," it said.

During the hearing on Oct 30, the panel said all players cited their agents as the source of the opportunity to play for the Malaysian national team and that the process, including submission of documents and bureaucratic steps for naturalisation, was entirely managed by FAM and their agents.

"They all equally confirmed that the necessary documentation, namely their own birth certificates as well as those of their parents and grandparents, was procured by their family members and later sent to the players, who then presented them to their respective agents or friends without further verification," it added.

The players, the panel said, also admitted to signing the application documents and appearing before the Malaysian authorities, but denied having read them or made themselves aware of the content of the documents they signed, some of which were in the national language, which they do not speak. - Bernama

## Azlan checks into 1,500m final

**AZLAN KUSTE** may be just 158cm tall, but that did not stop him from outrunning his taller and bigger rivals en route to checking into the men's 1,500m final at the Deaflympics 2025 at the Komazawa Metropolitan Stadium yesterday.

The Sabah runner clocked 4:14.69s to finish among the top six in Heat 2 of the first round, thus improving on his personal record of 4:16.00s set at the Rs Kinabalu Athletic League 2025 in February.

"Yes, the others were tall, but what's important is that I have put in the hard yards in training. Though they are bigger, I still made the final. I did the best I could," he said through a sign language interpreter.

He also explained that he stuck to the game plan drawn up by the coaches, including staying with the leading pack before going for broke at the final lap.

In Heat 2 of the first round, Iraq's Al-Jubainawi Aws Mohammed finished first in 4:10.76s, followed by Kenyan Koech John Kiplangat (4:12.37s) and Deaf Individual Neutral Athlete Charniak Aliaksandr (4:13.67s).

Azlan also thanked his parents and all those who have been his pillar of strength for always motivating him.

"I feel that I could win a medal in tomorrow's final. I just have to go flat out for the country.

"So, don't forget to support me always as I will continue to give everything I have to bring glory to Malaysia," he added.

Meanwhile, head coach Amiluddin Mohd Amin was delighted with Azlan for handling the pressure well and adapting to the weather conditions.

"Azlan is very determined to prove himself on his Deaflympics debut," he said. - Bernama

## S'gor hope appeal will be heard before return-leg tie against Sabah

**SELANGOR FC**, penalised by the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) for crowd trouble during the FA Cup quarterfinal, return-leg match against Negeri Sembilan FC last month, hope their appeal will be heard before the semifinal, second-leg match against Sabah FC on Nov 30.

Selangor reiterated that they do not support any action that can threaten the safety of all parties during the Oct 29 game against Negeri Sembilan at the Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) Stadium in Kelana Jaya.

Selangor also explained the four key incidents in the match against Negeri Sembilan that they believed led to the punishment by FAM.

Firstly, the Red Giants claimed that their fans

were not involved in setting off and throwing firecrackers in the stadium, and secondly, that the home supporters did not damage the seats or hurl them at the opposing fans because they (Selangor FC) found that only seats in the away fans' section were damaged and missing.

"Thirdly, we would like to clarify that no Selangor VVIP guest threw a water-filled plastic container at families of the opposing team.

"And fourthly, we would like to clarify that Selangor fans did not provoke Negeri Sembilan supporters, resulting in the commotion, which only occurred when the rival fans set off and threw firecrackers towards Selangor supporters," the club said in a statement on Monday.

Selangor also said they ensured that 170 security officers and police personnel were on duty during the game.

On Saturday (Nov 15), FAM disciplinary committee chairman Datuk Baljit Singh Sidhu was reported to have said that Selangor will play behind closed doors in the second leg of this season's FA Cup semi-final against Sabah FC on Nov 30 and their first home match for the same competition next season.

Baljit added that Selangor, who advanced to the semifinals with a 6-3 aggregate win over Negeri Sembilan, were also fined RM100,000 for repeated offences under Article 42, Paragraph 1 of the FAM Disciplinary Code. - Bernama



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**E**NGLAND manager Thomas Tuchel has described his inaugural year in the role as a “pure pleasure,” admitting he became “almost emotional” bidding farewell to his squad after a flawless World Cup qualification campaign.

Sir Gareth Southgate’s successor began his reign with a 2-0 victory against Albania, and the 2025 campaign concluded in Tirana with the same scoreline, wrapping up a perfect qualification journey.

England secured all eight Group K games and maintained eight clean sheets.

This remarkable achievement saw them become the first European side to win at least six World Cup qualifiers without conceding a single goal, demonstrating unwavering focus despite having already secured their spot last month.

Looking ahead to the Dec 5 draw in Washington DC, Tuchel expressed profound confidence, attributing it to the bond forged with his players.

“Yes, of course, because we grew together and I care for the players,” the England boss stated.

“I love the players. I love their attitude, I love their investment, how they bought into these camps from the start.”

He reflected on the difficulty of the upcoming break: “It’s very, very difficult for me now. I told them in the dressing room I have to say ‘Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and see you in March,’ which really hurts me

# Flawless Lions

*Tuchel reveals why he ‘almost got emotional’ after England’s perfect World Cup qualification*

I have to say.

“I almost got emotional because I would love to compete with them next Wednesday again, and next Saturday and it’s not possible.”

He added that the current dynamic is “everything that you can ask for as a coach at the moment, so it’s a pleasure to work with them, to push them.”

Tuchel emphasised the team’s strength, noting: “They are a strong group. At the moment, everyone is buying into what we are building and it’s top. And it’s of course never finished. It just continues and continues.”

Captain Harry Kane was singled out for his exemplary leadership and prolific scoring.

His late brace against Albania not only sealed another victory but also saw him surpass Pele’s international goal tally, reaching 78 goals.

Tuchel lauded his skipper, saying: “We just mentioned it in the dressing room and this is the cherry on top of everything that he overcomes Pele.

“The investment of Harry in these

matches is just outstanding. He is so invested in everything what we do.”

He further noted Kane’s consistent high performance: “If you see him play for Bayern Munich, I have to say it’s the same.

“He’s in a mindset and in a physical condition that is absolutely the highest level, produces goal after goal for us.

“The way how he works, tracks back, finds solutions in offensive play is just outstanding at the moment.”

The importance of tactical preparation was underscored by Kane’s first goal against Albania, which originated from a Bukayo Saka corner, just a day after the England captain spoke of developing an NFL-style playbook for set pieces.

Tuchel acknowledged the strategic value, particularly against well-organised defences.

“Of course we are relying on (set pieces). The best teams in the Premier League do it,” he explained.

He cited Arsenal as a benchmark for set-piece execution, adding: “At the

moment Arsenal is the key team or the benchmark in set pieces in the Premier League, and there is nothing to be ashamed of.

“Like against deep blocks, against teams who are so well drilled like (Albania), and so invested in defending, and so committed to defending, you open it up with a set piece goal.

“It’s full credit to my assistant coach and our set-piece coach. They do amazing work and then again the players buy into it.”

With the qualification journey complete, the focus now shifts to the World Cup draw, with Tuchel clearly optimistic about England’s prospects following a year of significant progress and team cohesion.

On the players left out of the Three Lions squad, Tuchel said he will speak to every player to explain his choices and lay out what they need to do to make it to next year’s World Cup.

Attacking midfielder Jack Grealish and rightback Trent Alexander-Arnold were among those not called up for this

## RESULTS

### WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS (EUROPE)

**Group A: Germany 6** (Woltemade 18, Gnabry 29, Sane 36, 41, Baku 67, Ouedraogo 79) **Slovakia 0, Northern Ireland 1** (Donley 44-pen) **Luxembourg 0.**

**Group G: Malta 2** (Cardona 36, Teuma 68-pen) **Poland 3** (Lewandowski 32, Wszolek 59, Zielinski 85), **Netherlands 4** (Reijnders 16, Gakpo 58-pen, Simons 60, Malen 62) **Lithuania 0.**

**Group L: Montenegro 2** (Osmajic 3, Krstovic 17) **Croatia 3** (Perisic 37-pen, Jakic 72, Vlasic 87), **Czech Republic 6** (Doudera 5, Chory 18, Coufal 32, Karabec 39, Soucek 44, Hranac 51) **Gibraltar 0.**

month’s qualifiers against Serbia and Albania.

“First of all, it’s my job now to make contact with everyone,” Tuchel said.

“Players like Trent, players that are on our long list, 55, 60 players, to reach out to them, be in touch with them, explain to them why they were not here. Explain to them what they have to do, where they can improve.

“Can they even do something or is it just a choice, so this is my job in the next weeks and months.

“Listen, we’ve just finished this camp and I think it’s important that I reach out to everyone, even to the guys we didn’t pick so regularly to tell them where they are and give them honest feedback.” - The Independent/Agencies



## Size does not matter

National runner Azlan Kuste (third, left) in action in the men’s 1,500m event in the 2025 Deaflympics at Komazawa Metropolitan Stadium in Japan yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

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