



Call for bold sentencing reforms to address prison overcrowding

Too many jailed for minor and non-violent offences that could be resolved through non-custodial alternatives such as community service: Criminologist

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Candidates pull all stops as Sabah polls campaign shifts into high gear

Foreign Deputy Minister Datuk Mohamad Alamin pledges RM1m for youth development in return for mandate in Bongawan.

'Online trade of threatened marine species rampant in Malaysia'

NGO findings show over RM320m shark and ray products sold on e-commerce platforms between October and December 2022.

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Pakatan Harapan candidate for the Moyog seat Remysta Jimmy Taylor with residents at Tamu Desa Babagon in Penampang yesterday accompanied by PKR vice-president Datuk Seri R. Ramanan, who is also Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development deputy minister. — BERNAMAPIC

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Punishing minors for sex harmful

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Children legally incapable of giving informed consent need protection from exploitation and coercion, says NGO.

'Punishing minors for sex more harmful than good'

➤ Children still developing mentally and emotionally, need protection from power imbalance with adults: NGO

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
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PETALING JAYA: Child protection groups warn that punishing minors for sexual activity can do more harm than good.

Persatuan Kebajikan Suara Kanak-Kanak Malaysia executive director Anderson Selvasegaram said children are legally incapable of giving informed consent to sexual activity.

He said minors are still developing mentally and emotionally, and need protection from the power imbalance with adults.

"However, in situations where both parties are children we must determine whether there was any exploitation or coercion involved or whether it was peer experimentation."

Anderson said safeguarding children requires a legal framework to prevent harm, combined with a child-centred approach

focused on protection, guidance, rehabilitation and support.

CRIB Foundation co-chairman Srividhya Ganapathy said criminalising minors for consensual sexual activity treats children as predators against one another.

"It is fundamentally at odds with a child-rights approach, especially in a country where over 41,000 teen pregnancies have already been recorded in just four years.

"A criminal record follows a child for life as it affects education, employment, travel and their own sense of worth. We risk turning a developmental mistake into a lifelong label.

"Contact with the criminal justice system is itself traumatic - arrest, detention, interrogation and court appearances. For a teenager, that experience can be more damaging than the original behaviour."

Srividhya said many teens do not fully grasp legal concepts like "statutory rape", "age of consent" or "distribution of intimate images" until someone explains these in clear,

age-appropriate language.

"If the law recognises that minors cannot vote, sign contracts or live independently because of their developmental stage, it is inconsistent to treat them as fully responsible sexual offenders when adults have not given them the information, skills and safe spaces they need."

She said criminalising minors can stop teens from seeking help or reporting abuse and blurs the line between victim and offender, allowing abusers to act with impunity.

Srividhya said CRIB welcomes the government's commitment to prioritise guidance and safe spaces over punishment.

Child clinical psychologist Dr Noor Aishah Rosli said criminalising minors for sexual activity is harmful because it can shape negative identity, lower self-esteem and lead to shame, anxiety and depression.

She said legal action can also damage family relationships and disrupt psychosocial development, leaving teens feeling isolated and distrustful of schools, police and welfare authorities.

Noor Aishah urged teachers and parents to monitor interactions between boys and girls, including siblings, and set clear boundaries.

Allocations for eight ministries approved

KUALA LUMPUR: The Dewan Rakyat approved Budget 2026 allocations at the committee stage for eight ministries this week.

The ministries are the Works Ministry, Transport Ministry, Health Ministry, Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry, Energy Transition and Water Transformation Ministry, Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry, Housing and Local Government Ministry and the Youth and Sports Ministry.

To date allocations for 19 ministries and the Prime Minister's Department have been approved, with committee-stage debates for eight more ministries set for next week.

The debate and winding-up sessions at the committee stage for each ministry are scheduled to be held till Nov 27.

MPs expressed appreciation to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar who took time to attend Minister's Question Time before departing for an official visit to the African continent.

One of the issues raised during question time was the strengthening of reforms to the country's legal institutions, for which Anwar said four Bills are expected to be tabled next year.

The Bills, covering freedom of information, an ombudsman, political funding and the separation of powers between the attorney-general and the public prosecutor, are currently undergoing an engagement process.

Amendments to the Whistleblower Protection Act 2010 will also be tabled to provide both protection and incentives for whistleblowers.

On the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2028, Anwar said regular monitoring is being carried out, with various improvement proposals under review, including tax incentives and allowances for witnesses willing to cooperate.

He also highlighted the notable achievements of enforcement agencies in combating corruption, leakages, smuggling and cartels, which have led to the recovery of RM15.5 billion in revenue.

Anwar said no government assets are being used for the Sabah polls campaign.

Also tabled for first reading were the Rukun Tetangga (Amendment) Bill 2025, the Legal Profession (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2025, the Finance Bill 2025 and the Measures for the Collection, Administration and Enforcement of Tax Bill 2025. - Bernama



Anwar arriving at the Waterkloof Air Force Base in Pretoria yesterday. - PIC COURTESY OF PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Anwar arrives in South Africa for G20 Summit

PRETORIA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim arrived in South Africa at 6.38pm local time on Thursday to attend the Group of 20 (G20) Leaders' Summit.

He and the Malaysian delegation were received on arrival by Malaysia's High Commissioner to South Africa Datuk Yubazlan Yusof, South Africa's Deputy Defence and Military Veterans Minister Major-Gen (R) Bantubonke Bantu Harrington Holomisa and International Relations and Cooperation Department chief director for East Asia and Oceania Thandiwe Fadane.

Anwar's four-day working visit from Thursday to Sunday is to attend the summit in Johannesburg as a guest of South African President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa.

The visit strategically reinforces Malaysia's historical ties with South Africa and capitalises on the summit to champion the Global South agenda on the world stage.

South Africa's G20 presidency is themed

"Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability".

The members of the G20 are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States, the African Union and the European Union.

Anwar is accompanied by Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Datuk Seri Zaliha Mustafa, Malaysian government officials and a business delegation.

He will deliver Malaysia's statement during session 1 to be held on the morning of Nov 22 and another statement during session 2 in the afternoon.

Anwar will then attend the G20 Leaders' Dinner hosted by Ramaphosa at the Nasrec Expo Centre.

He is also scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with the president on the second day of the working visit.

Apart from participating in G20-related meetings, he is scheduled to engage with South African Muslim leaders and attend a business forum with South African captains of industry.

Anwar is also slated to meet Botswana's Vice-President Ndaba Nkosinathi Gaolathe.

He will also be interviewed by Dr Sizwe Mpofo-Walsh, a university lecturer, podcaster and activist.

Topics for discussion include Malaysia-South Africa relations, global governance reform, Malaysia's steadfast support for the Palestinian cause and aspiration to become a full BRICS member.

On the final day of the visit he will attend session 3 of the G20 Summit.

Anwar and the delegation will then travel to Nairobi, Kenya for an official visit. - Bernama

M'sia, Hungary boost scientific cooperation

KUALA LUMPUR: Hungary is keen on strengthening scientific cooperation with Malaysia, especially regarding research into sustainable materials, bio-based composites and advanced manufacturing technologies.

Hungary's John von Neumann University Associate Professor and Director of Academic Affairs Dr Laszlo Toth said Malaysia's rapid progress in materials science and additive manufacturing has positioned the country as an important regional partner for Hungary.

"In recent years, Malaysia has become one of the most rapidly developing research hubs in the Asian region. Their focus on sustainable, high-performance materials provides a strong foundation for our joint research projects."

He was speaking after attending an MoA signing ceremony between John von Neumann University and SEGi University at the Embassy of Hungary, witnessed by Hungary's Ambassador-designate to Malaysia Dr Sandor Sipos.

He said Hungary's engagement with Malaysia would support wider scientific cooperation in biodegradable materials and emerging 3D-printing technologies.

SEGi University Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic, Research and Innovation) Prof Dr Srikumar Chakravarthi signed on behalf of SEGi.

He said the cooperation would expand opportunities for student and researcher mobility, joint publications and shared access to specialist research facilities. - Bernama

BN candidate prioritises young voters

MEMBAKUT: Barisan Nasional's (BN) Membakut candidate Rusman Dulamit is campaigning on three key pledges: to support the youth, back small businesses and fix local infrastructure.

Affectionately known as "Cikgu Rusman", the newcomer is prioritising young voters, a significant demographic in the constituency.

He said his experience as a former educator in the region would give him an advantage in connecting with youths.

"These are my former students. Since they already know me, it is easy to meet with them," he told reporters after a meeting with his campaign team at the Binsulok polling centre.

He added that among the issues raised by the team was post-school skills training for students from less fortunate backgrounds.

"We must help students who lack the means to continue their studies. We are trying to guide them towards Technical and Vocational Education and Training."

Rusman also proposed creating a team tasked with identifying the needs of young people in Membakut.

"This think-tank would involve young representatives from all ethnic groups in Membakut, so we could sit down together and discuss the actual needs of the youth."

He also pledged to focus on small business owners, particularly market and *tamu* traders predominantly from the B40 group, who depend on government aid.

He expressed belief that BN could reclaim Membakut, which was once its stronghold, given the party's record of delivering local development. BN is contesting 45 seats in the 17th Sabah State Election.

He directly linked such projects in Membakut and Bongawan, which are under the Kimanis parliamentary constituency, to the work of BN's Kimanis MP Datuk Mohamad Alamin.

Rusman will face a 10-cornered contest in Membakut, challenging Datuk Mohd Arifin Mohd Arif from GRS, who has held the seat since 2004. — Bernama

Pledges made as Sabah polls close in

Highlighted priorities include commitment to youth development, community welfare

KOTA KINABALU: With seven days left before polling for the 17th Sabah state election, candidates are presenting various pledges and commitments to win voter support in the seats they are contesting.

Barisan Nasional's (BN) Bongawan candidate Datuk Mohamad Alamin has pledged to allocate RM1 million for youth development in the constituency if

the party is given the mandate to govern again.

Mohamad, who is also foreign deputy minister, said the funds would come from the annual allocation for state assemblymen, Bernama reported.

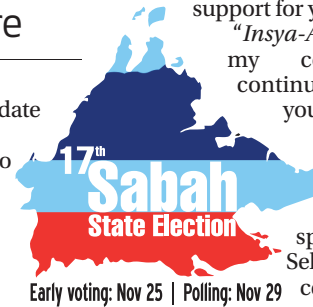
He added that the allocation would also include a RM5,000 fund

for youths to start up small or medium businesses, along with support for youth associations.

"*Insya-Allah*, this reflects my commitment and continuous support for youths if BN returns to lead Bongawan after the election."

He was speaking at the Seladan district polling centre on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Gabungan Rakyat Sabah's Bandau candidate Datuk Redonah Bahanda



Early voting: Nov 25 | Polling: Nov 29



ELECTION EVENT ... Communications Deputy Minister and DAP Wanita chief Teo Nie Ching (left) at the manifesto launch of PH's Kapayan candidate Datuk Jannie Lasimbang. On the right is Bandar Hilir Melaka PH state assemblyman Leng Chau Yen. — **BERNAMAPIC**

'Moyog native Remysta gives PH strong advantage'

PENAMPANG: PKR vice-president Datuk Seri R. Ramanan said the background of Pakatan Harapan (PH) candidate Remysta Jimmy Taylor as a true "Moyog boy", born, raised and well-known within the local community, is a strong advantage for him in the 17th Sabah state election.

Ramanan, who is also Entrepreneur and Cooperative Development deputy minister said the local connection gives PH an

edge, as Remysta not only grew up in Moyog but also received his education there and continues to reside in the area.

He added that throughout his visits to several villages, including Babagon and Donggongon, Remysta was warmly welcomed by the residents, who have long known him as a familiar figure, not merely a politician.

"Everyone who came to meet us, he (Remysta) called them aunty or

uncle. Those greetings were not just out of respect. They reflected long-standing relationships within the community."

Commenting on the prospects of PH in Moyog, Ramanan said the response from residents has been very encouraging.

However, he emphasised that all parties, especially the candidates and campaign machinery, must continue working hard until polling day.

"We are in a good position, but we cannot be overconfident. In politics, the tide could change within 24 hours. For now, our machinery is running strongly and the feedback we are receiving is positive, but there are still seven days to go. Anything could happen."

Moyog, which has 31,084 registered voters, is one of the two state constituencies in Penampang. The other is Kapayan. — Bernama

said she aims to prioritise community welfare in addition to ensuring strengthened development in the constituency.

Throughout her campaign, Redonah has taken a people-centric approach by meeting grassroots communities through village visits to listen to their needs and concerns.

"Leaders must always remain close to the people. Such visits should not only happen during election campaigns, but must be part of our culture to stand with the community in all circumstances."

In the polls, the Bongawan seat, which comes within the Kimanis parliamentary constituency, is seeing a nine-cornered contest, while Bandau, in the Kota Marudu parliamentary constituency, is witnessing a 13-cornered fight.

Polling for the state election, involving 73 state seats, has been set for Nov 29, with early voting to begin on Nov 25.

Boosting state economy main focus, says DAP

TAWAU: Bolstering state economy is the main message of Sabah DAP in its campaign for the 17th state polls.

Its chairman Phoong Jin Zhe, who is also the PH candidate for Likas, said emphasis is being placed on economic development issues as it is the foremost need of the Sabah public at present.

"A strong economy brings more job and business opportunities, which in turn creates prospects for young people," he told reporters at the PH-DAP Sri Tanjong operations room on Thursday.

He said Sabah DAP is also using the election platform to present new ideas to improve the economy in a more sustainable manner.

He added that Sri Tanjong candidate Philip Yap has achieved significant accomplishments over three years while leading the DAP Youth wing.

"Tawau DAP and Yap have been at the Taman Sin On New Market opening a mobile service counter and listening to the people, and at the service centre Yap also provides free legal advice sessions every month."

Phoong said Yap also collaborates with farmers and local enterprises to promote the 'QAV1' avocado developed by the Tawau Agriculture Department.

He expressed confidence that Yap's 10 years of experience in the Tawau Municipal Council would equip him well to administer Sri Tanjong and act as a bridge to the federal government.

Meanwhile, Yap said among his key commitments, if given the mandate, is to establish a task force with industry players to drive the tourism development in Tawau. — Bernama

Peto relying on development track record to defend Inanam

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah PKR deputy chairman and Inanam incumbent Datuk Peto Galim is relying on his five-year record of delivering major projects for further development in the area, should he be given a new mandate in the 17th Sabah state election.

Peto, 59, said his experience in administering Inanam has enabled him to focus on resolving long-standing issues such as traffic

congestion, flooding, urban poverty, lack of personal documentation and insufficient infrastructure.

He added that his track record and close state-federal cooperation networks are proof of his ability to continue reinforcing the development of Inanam.

"My five years as an assemblyman give me a clear advantage. We began work immediately and have delivered tangible results that the people of

Inanam have witnessed firsthand."

Peto, who is also Sabah PKR election machinery director, said several strategic projects have been successfully advanced through robust state-federal collaboration, including the nearly RM126 million Likas Flood Mitigation Project, which was approved this year.

"Once this project is completed, it would reduce, if not eliminate, flooding in Likas, Taman Nelly,

Kolombong and Inanam."

He also said that via state-federal discussions and joint efforts, the flood mitigation project in Menggatal has been reactivated, with an additional allocation of over RM30 million to complete its second phase.

Peto said several existing infrastructure projects, such as improvements to ease traffic congestion in Inanam town and road upgrades in Menggatal and Batu 5,

are also a result of the collaboration.

"Just go to Inanam now. You would see the work in progress and the change, with the roundabout being converted into a signalised junction, which is nearly complete."

He also highlighted his achievements, including the gazetting of more than 22 villages and the construction of more than 300 homes under the Sabah Maju Jaya Rumah Mesra programme. — Bernama



Study reveals over RM320m shark, ray trade online

Management approach being reviewed to ensure more effective action, says Fisheries Dept

BY FAIZ RUZMAN

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PETALING JAYA: More than RM326 million in online trade involving shark and ray products has been uncovered but continues to thrive on major e-commerce platforms in Malaysia.

In a statement yesterday, the Fisheries Department highlighted the urgent need to strengthen monitoring, enforcement and regulatory controls on threatened marine species.

The Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (Traffic) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in a collaborative research project on Nov 12 exposed the widespread online trade of sharks and rays in the country.

Department director-general Datuk Adnan Hussain said it takes these findings seriously and values the continued cooperation with Traffic and WWF in improving information transparency, public awareness and understanding the need to protect species that are vulnerable to exploitation.

"The department is reviewing its management, including strengthening monitoring operations, updating policies and reinforcing on-ground enforcement mechanisms to ensure more effective action."

Traffic Southeast Asia programme manager Serene Chng said the study, titled "From Sea to Screen: Malaysia's Online Shark and Ray Trade", found that at least 5.25 million kilogrammes of such products were traded between October and December 2022.

The study identified 1,814 sale posts across Facebook, Shopee, Lazada, Google and other sales platforms.

A minimum of 2.92 million kilogrammes of shark products and 2.33 million kilogrammes of ray products were recorded.

It also found the bulk of items offered for sale were not fins but fresh meat, processed meat and whole carcasses.

The study showed the minimum market value of the recorded listings were RM200



The study by Traffic and WWF found that the bulk of items offered for sale were not fins but fresh meat, processed meat and whole carcasses. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

million for shark products and RM126 million for ray products.

Following the expose, Adnan stressed that Malaysia must also meet its commitments under global wildlife regulations.

"Malaysia, as a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), carries the responsibility of regulating international trade involving threatened species.

"The department ensures compliance with CITES permit requirements, conducts species identification checks and maintains close collaboration with enforcement agencies at the country's entry points, guided by scientific data and international standards.

"This responsibility is strengthened through reviews and enhanced enforcement capacity."

The department also said several shark and ray species are protected domestically under the Fisheries Act 1985 and the Fisheries (Control of Endangered Species of Fish) Regulations 1999.

"Protected species include the Great Hammerhead (*Sphyrna mokarran*), Scalloped Hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*), Smooth Hammerhead (*Sphyrna zygaena*), Oceanic Whitetip Shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*), as well as manta rays such as the Giant Manta Ray (*Mobula birostris*) and the Reef Manta Ray (*Mobula alfredi*).

"Sharks and rays are apex predators that play an important role in maintaining the balance of marine ecosystems. The department

is committed to ensuring that trade and landings involving threatened species are strictly controlled, carried out with integrity and aligned with international standards and national legislation.

"We appreciate the efforts of WWF and Traffic in providing information that helps strengthen our marine resources management"

The study also revealed that species identification was limited, but among the posts online in which species could be confirmed, 12% involved endangered species while 2% involved critically endangered ones.

Traffic said the true proportion is likely higher due to the difficulty of verifying species from online imagery.

The co-authors of the report said the findings highlight deep regulatory and sustainability gaps, particularly as locally sourced sharks and rays continue to be traded online without species-level protection.

"These findings raise concerns for sharks and rays in Malaysian waters, most of which are not legally protected but heavily traded online, even critically endangered species."

WWF-Malaysia senior marine conservation officer Serena Adam said the broader ecological consequences also warrant attention.

"Conserving sharks and rays is not just about saving species, it is also about sustaining ocean health that benefits our coastal communities. We urge everyone to take a stand, say no to eating sharks and rays for the sake of both people and nature."

Malacca ready for monsoon season

MALACCA: The state government here has made comprehensive preparations for various aspects of disaster management, including coordination of relevant agencies and authorities to address potential floods during the Northeast Monsoon season, which began last week.

State Housing, Local Government, Drainage, Climate Change and Disaster Management Committee chairman Datuk Rais Yasin said the State Disaster Management Committee, chaired by the state secretary, has been holding regular meetings to monitor and discuss the latest developments throughout the monsoon period.

"Although the monsoon has begun, Malacca remains in stable condition and no major issues or disasters have been reported. Nevertheless, we will continue to stay on alert in all aspects.

"The committee has received a briefing from the Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia) on the weather forecast, preparedness measures for the monsoon and possible scenarios."

He was speaking after officiating at the 2025 State Cooperative Movement Appreciation Night event on Thursday.

The event was also attended by Malaysian Cooperative Commission chairman Lt-Jen (Rtd) Datuk Ahmad Norihan.

Rais added that monitoring at high-risk locations is being carried out periodically by relevant agencies and early warnings would be issued if any disaster risks are detected to enable residents to take precautionary measures.

He also said temporary evacuation centres have been fully prepared in all aspects, particularly in terms of welfare, to ensure the comfort and safety of affected residents.

Earlier, MetMalaysia said in a statement that the 2025/2026 Northeast Monsoon, which began on Nov 14, is expected to continue until March 2026.

During the period, there would be between five and seven episodes of continuous heavy rainfall forecasts. — Bernama

Penang launches luxury cruise ship

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang tourism industry is poised for a boost with the launch of the *Penang Princess*, the state's first high-end cruise ship restaurant designed to enhance its maritime attractions.

Penang Port Commission chairman Datuk Yeoh Soon Hin said the project marks a significant milestone in maritime tourism development, laying a solid foundation for the state to become a more diversified and competitive international tourism destination.

"*Penang Princess* is the first high-end cruise ship in Penang that integrates luxury dining and a sea sightseeing experience.

"It would further extend tourism appeal from Penang Island to the Straits of Malacca. The project not only enriches tourism product offerings but also creates multi-faceted economic benefits."

Yeoh was present to witness the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding among project partners Ocean World Cruise Holdings Group and Viet Princess Cruiser Corporation yesterday.

He said the project is expected to generate substantial economic momentum, creating new job opportunities across various sectors, including hotels, catering and maritime operations. — Bernama

Digital safety initiative for teenagers

KUALA LUMPUR: The #ThinkTwice Parental Advisory initiative was launched yesterday to help parents safeguard the digital safety of teenagers through a collaboration between TikTok, the Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia (Content Forum) and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC).

TikTok said in a statement the initiative is part of the ongoing #ThinkTwice digital literacy campaign, which emphasises a community-and-evidence-based approach to online safety.

The campaign also highlights the importance of shared responsibility among parents, digital platforms and policymakers, while respecting the rights of children to access information, express opinions, protect their privacy and enjoy freedom of thought.

Content Forum CEO Mediha Mahmood said the digital wellbeing of teenagers requires family support, as online habits and culture are

shaped by a healthy home environment.

"Online safety should not mean restricting access to the digital space. The internet is a reflection of real-world social issues.

"We must empower parents to nurture creativity while fostering vigilance, encouraging healthy routines and building meaningful conversations with their teenage children."

TikTok Malaysia Public Policy head Firdaus Fadzil said challenges faced by teenagers such as bullying, peer pressure, mental health concerns and harmful behaviours are not new phenomena, but parental roles remain crucial in mitigating them.

"Parents and guardians are the primary guides, as they are most familiar with the needs of their children.

"Therefore, we aim to equip parents with the knowledge and tools to build a responsible digital generation so our teenagers are better prepared to navigate the online

environment safely."

He added that the #ThinkTwice guide helps parents play an active role through TikTok's comprehensive safety features, in line with global research findings.

MCMC said the guide complemented its Internet Safety Campaign and supports government efforts to create a safer and more responsible digital ecosystem.

It also said platforms such as TikTok play an important role in protecting users while respecting the rights of children to access information and express their views appropriately for their age, in line with the commitment of Malaysia to strengthening online safety standards.

"Initiatives such as #ThinkTwice equip families with practical tools, guidance and awareness to ensure teenagers could explore, learn and connect online with confidence and safety." — Bernama

'Not all violators of law need to be sent to jail'

➤ Incarceration of individuals for minor and non-violent offences main cause of overcrowding in prisons, says expert

■ BY IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE
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PETALING JAYA: Imprisonment must be treated as a last resort, and Malaysia urgently needs bold sentencing reforms backed by strong political will, according to criminologist Datuk Shahul Hamid Abdul Rahim.

He said Malaysia's prison congestion has reached a point at which incremental fixes were no longer sufficient, adding that what the country needs is a "fundamental shift" in how it approaches crime, punishment and rehabilitation.

"The main driver of overcrowding is the imprisonment of individuals for minor and non-violent offences that could be resolved through alternative measures," he told *theSun*.

He said these offences include casual drug use, petty theft, low-level economic crimes and administrative violations, categories which in many developed jurisdictions are commonly diverted to community sentences, treatment programmes or rehabilitation initiatives.

"Too many people are being sent to prison for offences that do not involve violence or threats to public safety. These are cases that can be handled through non-custodial options, but our current laws and policies still prioritise imprisonment as the primary response."

He said detainees held on remand also contribute significantly to the overcrowding issue, with high remand rates, slow court processes and prosecution delays often resulting in individuals spending lengthy periods in custody long before their cases are heard.

Mandatory minimum sentencing provisions, especially in drug-related laws, further restrict judges from imposing alternative punishments, even when the circumstances warrant it.

"Mandatory imprisonment ties the hands of judges. When the law prescribes a custodial sentence, no alternatives can be offered even if they are more appropriate. This has wide ripple effects on prison capacity," he said.



Shahul Hamid said detainees held on remand also contribute significantly to overcrowding, due to high remand rates, slow court processes and prosecution delays. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

He added that inadequate rehabilitation programmes, high recidivism rates and the lack of post-release support worsen the situation.

Malaysia's limited community-based facilities, such as halfway houses, monitoring units and local rehabilitation centres, mean many low-risk offenders are sent to prison simply because no viable alternatives exist.

Drug addiction remains one of the biggest drivers of imprisonment.

Many individuals behind bars are there for personal drug consumption rather than trafficking, yet receive no structured treatment outside prison.

"In many countries with lower prison densities – Europe, the Asia-Pacific and parts of Asia – non-custodial sentences, diversion programmes and drug treatments are widely used. Malaysia still leans heavily on a prison-centric model," he said.

On whether offences suitable for non-custodial sentencing are being diverted, Shahul Hamid said many categories should be prioritised for alternatives, but are not.

"These include non-violent offences, (mild) drug use cases, minor traffic offences and juvenile cases. Young offenders should be directed to educational or rehabilitation centres, but gaps in the law, limited programmes and conservative sentencing practices prevent this from happening," he said.

He added that while judges have discretion, their ability to impose alternative sentencing is limited by the absence of comprehensive sentencing guidelines and by infrastructure constraints.

"A judge may want to impose a community sentence, but if there is no monitoring unit or community correction centre available in that district, prison becomes the default option."

"Prison must be the absolute last resort. With proper legal reforms, structured implementation of non-custodial alternatives and holistic support for low-risk offenders, Malaysia could reduce costs, enhance public safety and strengthen rehabilitation outcomes. But all this requires strong political will. Without it, the overcrowding problem will persist, no matter how many new prisons we build."

On Monday, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Shamsul Anuar Nasarah told Parliament that the number of inmates held in prisons nationwide has exceeded 84,000, surpassing the maximum capacity of 76,000.

He said 84,143 individuals are currently being housed in prison facilities, while another 6,640 inmates are undergoing community-based rehabilitation outside prison walls.

"The actual capacity of our prisons is 76,311. This shows that there is overcrowding, with an excess of 7,872 inmates beyond total capacity," he was quoted as saying.

Report on teen murder suspect almost finalised

PETALING JAYA: The psychiatric report on a teenage boy accused of murdering a 16-year-old female student in a secondary school toilet in Bandar Utama is expected to be completed next month.

Lawyer Kitson Foong, representing the 14-year-old suspect, said medical experts at Hospital Bahagia Ulu Kinta in Perak informed the defence that more time was required to finalise the report.

"The court took into account Section 342(4) of the Criminal Procedure Code, which allows for an extension of nearly a month, in the hope that the report can be completed before the next proceedings."

"A comprehensive mental examination of my client is crucial to determine his level of intelligence before the court can accept a guilty plea in the High Court or proceed with a trial for the murder charge," he said outside the court following case mention yesterday.

Foong said Magistrate Amira Sariaty Zainal set Dec 19 for the next mention.

The boy, a Form One student, was charged in the Magistrate's Court on Oct 22 with murdering the 16-year-old student.

No plea was recorded as murder cases fall under the jurisdiction of the High Court.

The charge, framed under Section 302 of the Penal Code, carries the death sentence or imprisonment of between 30 and 40 years and not less than 12 strokes of the cane, upon conviction. – Bernama

Inmate caught after escaping from prison

SRI AMAN: Police recaptured a Sri Aman Central Prison inmate in less than 12 hours after his escape, thanks to swift action and public cooperation.

Sri Aman district police chief Supt Dennis Bunyam said the inmate, John Sambang Sangau, 39, was reported missing from prison supervision at about 7.15am on Thursday.

Police immediately launched an operation, deploying personnel across village roads, plantation areas and nearby settlements.

Based on public tip-offs, the operation team located the inmate at about 6.20pm in an unfinished vacant house along Jalan Brayun, about two kilometres from the prison.

He was detained without incident and is believed to have used the structure as a temporary hiding place.

Bunyam thanked the public for their assistance and commended the security teams involved.

Police are now investigating how the escape occurred and the case is being probed under Sections 223 and 224 of the Penal Code.

A remand application will be made to determine the method of escape and whether any other individuals were involved. – Bernama

Justice system overhaul crucial as detainee numbers climb: Lawyer

PETALING JAYA: Lowering bail thresholds, removing mandatory minimum sentences and expanding non-custodial sentencing are among the urgent reforms needed to address chronic prison overcrowding.

Human rights advocate and lawyer Charles Hector said the "single biggest problem" is the estimated 30,000 remand prisoners currently housed in prisons, comprising individuals whose trials have not begun or are incomplete.

On the overstretched criminal justice system, Hector told *theSun* that these are people who have not been found guilty.

"Yet many remain behind bars for months, even years, simply because their trials have not begun."

"This is not the fault of the accused. The delay lies with the prosecution and

the courts," Hector said via WhatsApp.

He added that trials involving remand prisoners should be expedited and completed between three and six months, or at minimum proceed to the stage at which the prosecution proves a *prima facie* case.

"We desperately need more judges and more courts. Criminal cases have increased, civil cases have skyrocketed, practising lawyers have doubled or tripled, yet the judiciary has not grown at the same rate."

Hector suggested that courts could sit in the evenings to clear backlogs, with the aim of reducing the remand population.

To immediately ease overcrowding, he proposed a controversial but legally viable measure – "discharge not

amounting to an acquittal" – for any accused person whose trial cannot begin within three months.

"If the prosecution and the courts are not ready to start the trial after three months, the accused should be discharged but not acquitted. They can always be re-charged when the system is ready to proceed," he said.

Hector also noted that many remand prisoners were not behind bars because they were considered to be dangerous, but because they were poor.

"Judges must be poverty-sensitive when setting bail. If someone can only afford RM10, then bail should be RM10," he said.

Once bail is posted by a surety, the sum becomes locked until the case concludes, leaving families exposed to

financial pressure and risk.

He said to address this, Malaysia should develop mechanisms similar to Thailand's Justice Fund Act 2015, which provides loans to low-income individuals for bail and legal costs, ensuring equal access to justice.

Hector also urged Parliament to remove all mandatory minimum prison sentences, saying that judges, not lawmakers, are best placed to decide proportionate punishments.

"Laws should set only the maximum prison term. Mandatory minimums tie judges' hands and result in unjustly long sentences."

He added that community service, counselling, mentoring programmes and suspended sentences, widely used in other countries, should be introduced

in Malaysia.

"A suspended sentence would allow a court to impose a prison term but delay imprisonment contingent on compliance with certain conditions."

"Any breach would activate the original sentence. This alone would significantly reduce prisoner numbers," he said.

With overcrowding driven largely by remand detainees and rigid sentencing laws, Hector questioned why the government continues planning new prisons.

"The solution isn't more prisons, it's reform."

"Malaysia must overhaul its bail system, sentencing laws and judicial capacity. Prison should be the last resort, not the default." – by *Ikhwan Zulkaflee*

Mini farm thriving on food waste

➤ Kitchen scraps and leftovers used to produce compost to generate 'balanced' fertile soil

KUALA LUMPUR: In the heart of the bustling capital lies an urban garden that supplies fresh vegetables and fruits to nearby residents all year.

Tucked behind overgrown shrubs, opposite a row of terrace houses and parking bays in Taman Setapak Permai, the sight of leafy greens and thriving brinjal plants at the garden entrance is a welcome surprise.

"Welcome to Kebun Lestari Setapak Permai (Setapak Permai Sustainable Garden)," said a young man wearing a gardening hat and holding a hoe.

Yap Jing Zong, 25, who is also an entrepreneur and founder of 4Leaf Nursery, said the site of the garden used to be an abandoned plot, where residents had been dumping their garbage for about 20 years.

He said the secret to healthy crops lies not only in fertiliser, water and environmental conditions but also in the soil structure.

"If we take good care of the soil, the soil will take care of our plants, helping them grow strong and healthy," he said, adding that 70% of the fertilisers used in the garden

comprise food waste collected from around the city.

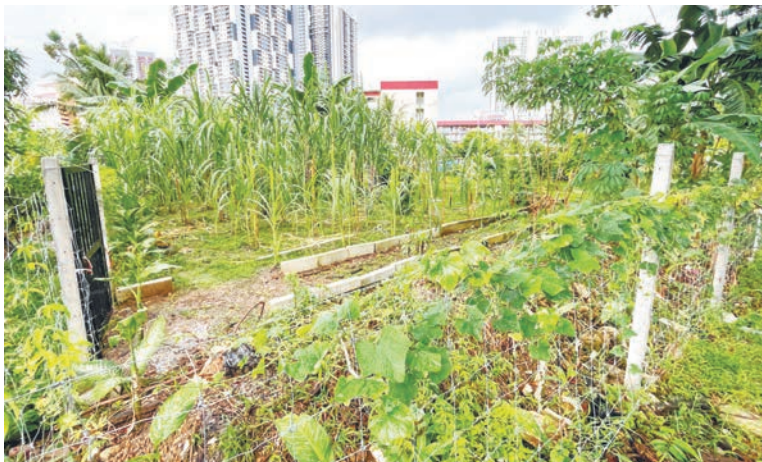
What began as a hobby during the movement control order (MCO) period five years ago opened Yap's eyes to the potential of food waste in gardening, Bernama reported.

His own mini home garden, where he cultivates vegetables, fruits and herbs, thrives on compost he made entirely from the food scraps generated by his household.

Through his own do-it-yourself and trial-and-error efforts, Yap managed to produce compost within three months. His family enjoyed their homegrown produce and even shared it with neighbours, easing their household burden during the MCO.

"After seeing how well the plants grew using food-waste compost, I began to think bigger. I wanted to start a bigger garden that could benefit the community while turning food waste into compost.

"I realised the prices of vegetables and fruits rise when farmers are forced to buy expensive chemical fertilisers, and not many people are



Yap said the secret to healthy crops lies not only in fertiliser, water and environmental conditions but also in the soil structure. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA /THE SUN

willing to separate their food waste and turn it into compost because the process is complicated and smelly.

"That is why I made it my mission to reduce food waste from ending up in landfills and instead 'save' it by turning it back into food," he said.

Yap, who was a university student then, started his first urban garden in mid-2022 in Setapak before moving to the present site in early 2023.

He began collecting food waste from homes and restaurants in Setapak and Wangsa Maju almost

daily as early as 3.30am, riding a modified tricycle.

"Some restaurant owners generously gave me their food waste for free, but there were also those who took the opportunity to charge me."

After collecting waste from restaurants and even hospitals, Yap would arrive at the garden by 7am to produce compost before heading to his 9am classes.

He said making compost is not about dumping waste into a bin, adding that it is a carefully balanced

ecosystem involving microorganisms and insects.

"Composting is a natural decomposition process using organic materials such as food scraps and garden waste to produce nutrient-rich soil. This process is driven by microorganisms and natural 'workers' in the soil such as earthworms, snails and fungi," he said.

Kitchen waste such as fruit peels, coffee grounds and eggshells breaks down with the help of worms and insects, while cooked food scraps such as rice, fish and meat require the help of bacteria like *lactobacillus* and fungi such as *aspergillus* and *penicillium*.

Yap said many people dislike the smell and wet texture of food waste, but he found an effective way to eliminate unpleasant odours.

"The secret is using dried leaves and wood chips. For every layer of food waste, separate it with a layer of dried leaves, wood or paper. This helps balance the decomposition process, eliminates odour and ensures good aeration in the compost," he explained.

He added that if someone wants to make compost at home, they should start with fruit and vegetable scraps and avoid oily leftovers, meat and bones.

Jerky made with century-old recipe captures market

SEREMBAN: A jerky recipe that is more than a hundred years old, passed down from generation to generation, has become a source of pride for entrepreneur, Mohamad Yusof Mohd Surid, 37.

His family business Angku Trading produces "Daging Dendeng Ibu Gayah", that has achieved a solid foothold in the local market.

He said because of the family's jerky recipe – inherited from his ancestors and later perfected by his mother – the product has now become the top choice for hikers, travellers as well as haj and umrah pilgrims seeking an authentic traditional taste.

Named after his mother, Rugayah Sidin, 73, the product is sold in a travel-friendly retort packaging, an innovation that ensures longer shelf life without compromising on texture or flavour.

"When I first started, I sold the jerky in bottles, but it couldn't last long. For nearly ten years, we operated on a small scale while my wife and I conducted our own research to preserve the original taste and extend its shelf life.

"Eventually, we developed the retort version, combining modern cooking methods with premium ingredients to maintain the traditional flavour. This innovation makes it easier

for travellers and hikers to enjoy home-style meals anywhere, as the product doesn't require refrigeration and is easy to prepare."

Mohamad Yusof said the product has also become a favourite among pilgrims as it is practical and convenient to carry abroad, with some customers even taking it as far as Mount Fuji in Japan.

With an initial capital of RM13,000, he spent six months on research and development to refine the product.

His business received support from the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority in the form of equipment worth RM10,000 and a RM10,000 grant from the Islamic

Economic Development Foundation of Malaysia for facilities, equipment and halal certification.

He said he uses the tender part of premium beef, ensuring a richer quality compared with similar products on the market.

"With better machinery and modern equipment, *Alhamdulillah*, our production has increased from processing 30kg of meat per week to 100kg every two weeks, equivalent to over 600 retort packs."

Each 200g pack contains two servings and is sold at RM21.90, available at selected petrol stations as well as on Shopee and TikTok.

Mohamad Yusof also empowers

his local community by hiring single mothers and housewives to help prepare raw ingredients such as onions, lemongrass and *galangal* (ginger).

"I don't have permanent employees, but I pay local housewives and single mothers in cash to help clean and prepare the ingredients, usually over 30kg at a time."

With monthly sales exceeding RM7,000 as of last October, Mohamad Yusof hopes that Daging Daging Ibu Gayah will soon be recognised as one of Malaysia's best locally made halal ready-to-eat food products that is on par with established commercial brands. – Bernama

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■ P. CHANDRA SAGARAN
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Innovators celebrated at special awards ceremony

► Perak govt lauds courage to think out of box to improve delivery system

IPOH: The Perak Innovation Awards recently feted government departments and agencies, as well as schools and institutions of higher learning, that have come up with creative solutions to remain competitive amid dynamic changes in the global landscape.

A total of 194 participants took part in the competition. The ceremony was held at Dewan Bankuet in the State Secretariat building here on November 17.

The competition was divided into eight categories, including for local authorities, district and land offices, sustainable “green Earth”, higher institutions of learning, and secondary and primary schools. There was also an open category.

The jury panel included representatives from Yayasan Inovasi Malaysia, the Malaysian Association of Creativity and Innovation, the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry, the JKR Centre of Excellence for Engineering Technology, and Digital Perak Corporation Holdings, as well as some from academic institutions.

The event was officiated by State Science, Environment and Green Technology Committee Chairman Teh Kok Lim on behalf of Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad.

Present was Perak Deputy State Secretary (management) Datuk Nor Sham Rahman.

In his speech read out by Teh, Saarani said the increasing number of participants this year showed that innovation is expanding and



Kolej Komuniti Pasir Salak team members receiving their prize from Teh.

accepted by all walks of life.

“In the context of administration, innovation is not just about technology but also the courage to think out of the box to improve the delivery system.

“Innovation must be a culture and not a seasonal initiative. It must be included in all plans, action and decision-making,” he said.

Saarani pointed out that the “sustainable green Earth” stood out

among all categories.

“It focuses on sustainable environment, renewable energy and maintenance of biodiversity,” he added.

He said Perak has potential to

produce skillful innovators to compete internationally.

He cited a road project from Bagan Datuk to Kampung Sejagop which received second placing in the Road Engineering Association of Australia and Australasia’s “Road for Community” category during a ceremony in South Korea.

Kolej Komuniti Pasir Salak beat 11 others to emerge the winner in this category. The team members went home with RM10,000 and a trophy.

Their energy efficiency innovation for air conditioning units would prevent leakages through use of pressure sensors, solenoid valves and a smart warning application.

The solenoid valve is an electromechanically operated valve that uses an electric current to generate a magnetic field which in turn opens or closes a valve mechanism to control the flow of liquid or gas in a system.

The system helps save energy, reduce maintenance costs and protect the environment by preventing emission of cooling gas which damages the ozone layer.

Sabah sends differently-abled players to chess tournament

■ BY JOSHUA CHANG
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KOTA KINABALU: Ten differently-abled local chess players shall represent Sabah at the 4th Malaysian Lions International Chess Championship for People with Disabilities in Kuala Lumpur tomorrow.

They were selected based on their performances at the qualifying Lions and Sabah Chess Association Tournament on Aug 10.

The initiative, a collaborative effort of 13 Lions clubs across Sabah, aims to empower individuals with disabilities through skill-building, competitive exposure and access to national-level sporting pathways.

Rizawani Fiona Heng from the Lions Club of Kota Kinabalu City, who serves as the organising chairperson, emphasised the programme’s profound impact.

“This platform gives our athletes

confidence, identity and recognition,” she said. “Chess is more than a game — it unlocks opportunity.”

The programme has a proven track record of success. A notable past participant from Sandakan progressed to eventually represent Malaysia at the 2023 Paralympic SEA Games, serving as an inspiration for aspiring athletes across the state.

The athletes’ journey to the national stage received a significant boost with a RM10,000 sponsorship from the Sabah Council of Social Service (MPMS).

The sponsorship was presented by MPMS director Jais Asri during a modest ceremony witnessed by District Governor 308-A2 Datuk Winnie Lee and MPMS executive secretary Joanne Lee.

The event also saw the collective support of presidents from all 13 participating Lions clubs, demonstrating unified community backing for the delegation.



Jais (4th left) presents the sponsorship to Winnie. Also present are Rizawani, Joanne and Lions reps.



Officials from SKE and Mahkota Medical Centre all ready to hold the charitable event.

Free cancer screening in Malacca tomorrow

■ BY SIVAA TANGAI RAJU
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

MALACCA: The Seck Kia Eenh (SKE) Malacca Buddhist Association is co-organising a cancer awareness programme tomorrow to help those aged 40 years and above be aware of early warning signs and life-saving interventions through blood tests, medical talks as well as doctor consultations.

SKE president Tan Kim See urged residents to join the programme, stressing that opportunities for free medical screenings with consultations do not come often.

The event, in collaboration with Mahkota Medical Centre, will be held from 10.30am to 4pm in Wisma Seck Kia Eenh at Jalan Gajah Berang here.

“We believe that compassion extends beyond spiritual practice as it includes caring for the physical and mental well-being of our community,” he said.

“A couple of months ago, we organised free blood donation drives and dental check-ups. Now we are coming up with a cancer awareness programme.”

Meanwhile, SKE Cancer Fund chairman Kenny Khoo urged the public to seize this opportunity, pointing out that identifying cancer early would increase the chances of successful treatment.

“Many elderly residents may find it difficult to travel or afford regular health screenings, so now we made it for them within a trusted environment.

“Screening is not something to fear. It is an act of self-care and love for your family,” he said.

While many people have registered, SKE expects

a lot of walk-ins.

Mahkota Medical Centre’s consultant clinical oncologist Dr Chong Kwang Jeat noted that cancer cases are rising due to negligence of the public in examining their health status.

Over 65% of cases in Malaysia are detected late mostly due to people fearing diagnosis or being unaware of the benefits of screening, he said.

“Many cancers progress silently. This session will help Malaysians understand warning signs and learn about modern, less-invasive treatments that lead to faster recovery and higher survival.

“Late-stage cancer means more aggressive treatment, higher costs, and lower survival. For example, early-stage breast cancer survival exceeds 85%, but drops below 25% when detected late,” he said.

Chong will give a talk on how cancer develops and why early detection matters. Participants will also learn about which screenings suit their age as well as how new surgical advances shorten recovery periods.

The centre’s consultant general and colorectal surgeon Dr Ang Chin Wee stressed that cancer rates in Malaysia are showing an upward trend owing to lack of awareness and late detection.

“The lifetime risk of developing cancer before age 75 is about 14.4%. Colorectal cancer makes up around 13.5% of new cases.

“Don’t wait for symptoms and remember that screening saves lives because it detects early lesions or polyps before symptoms.

“In fact, early surgery greatly improves survival and quality of life,” he said.



Indonesia landslides death toll rises to 30

➤ More heavy rain expected across several regions in coming weeks: National Weather Service

BANJARNEGARA: The death toll from multiple landslides in Indonesia's Java island last week has risen to 30 as the search to find many still missing continues, a disaster official said.

Heavy rainfall triggered a landslide that destroyed at least 48 homes in the Banjarnegara district in Central Java province on Saturday, according to the National Disaster Mitigation Agency.

More than 700 rescuers from agencies

including military, police, search and rescue teams, and volunteers have been deployed to Banjarnegara, as well as tracking dogs, said agency spokesman Abdul Muhari on Thursday.

"The joint search and rescue team has found seven deceased victims of the landslide disaster. With this discovery, the death toll has risen to 10 (in Banjarnegara), while 18 people are being searched for," he said.

An AFP photographer saw heavy machinery digging through landslides in Banjarnegara villages as rescue teams combed through the debris.

Muhari said nearly 1,000 people are still evacuated from the district and warned that the potential for subsequent landslides due to rain, water puddles and flowing springs may hamper operations.

A devastating landslide also hit three

villages in the Central Java district of Cilacap on Thursday last week.

At least 20 people are confirmed dead and three are missing in Cilacap, located around 74km from Banjarnegara, the agency said on Wednesday, with officials yet to provide an update.

The annual monsoon season, which typically falls between June and September, often brings landslides, flash floods and waterborne diseases.

The National Weather Service has also warned that more heavy rain is expected across several regions in the coming weeks.

Climate change has impacted storm patterns, including the duration and intensity of the season, leading to heavier rainfall, flash flooding and stronger wind gusts.

Flash floods and landslides in a remote area of Papua in Indonesia's east have killed at least 23 people, said Muhari. - AFP

President orders search for abducted schoolgirls

LAGOS: Nigerian President Bola Tinubu on Thursday ordered State Defence Minister Alhaji Bello Matawalle to go to western Kebbi state, where two dozen girls kidnapped from their boarding school earlier this week are still missing.

The order for Matawalle to "relocate to Kebbi state over the abduction of 24 schoolgirls" comes as pressure mounts on the government after US President Donald Trump this month threatened military action over what he described as the killing of Nigeria's Christians, a narrative rejected by Nigerian authorities.

A presidency statement said Matawalle has "experience in dealing with banditry and mass kidnapping", after he secured the release of 279 students aged between 10 and 17 who had been kidnapped from a government secondary school in 2021 in western Zamfara state.

Another state, Kwara, in the east of the country, has ordered some schools shut following a deadly raid on a church on Tuesday, a government official told AFP.

Gunmen stormed a church service in the state, killing at least two people.

Church elder Michael Agbabiaka told AFP that the attackers fired shots, beat up worshippers and ransacked bags, taking cash and phones.

He said 35 people were abducted by the attackers.

Following the attack, the Kwara state government directed the closure of schools in four areas as part of steps to "address recent security breaches", said state government spokesman Ibraheem Abdullateef.

"This decision was taken to checkmate kidnapers who may want to use schoolchildren as soft targets and human shields amid a renewed crackdown on their hideouts by the security operatives," he said.

Nigerian security forces have been placed on high alert as the country faces an uncomfortable spotlight on its security situation, the Information minister said this week.

Tinubu has "postponed" a trip to South Africa for a G20 summit and to Angola for an Africa-European Union meeting to receive "security briefings" on the kidnapped schoolgirls and the church attack, his office said. - AFP



JOYOUS CAMARADERIE ... Fatima Bosch of Mexico reacting next to other contestants after being crowned Miss Universe during the 74th Miss Universe pageant in Bangkok, Thailand yesterday. - REUTERSPIC

Yoon indicted over death of marine case

SEOUL: A special counsel investigating the 2023 death of a marine said yesterday it has indicted former president Yoon Suk Yeol on charges of exerting undue pressure on the military's probe into the case, with 11 other former senior security and Defence officials also indicted.

Yoon has been questioned by the special counsel over suspicions that he ordered the presidential office and the Defence Ministry to reverse the initial findings of a military probe into the death of Cpl Chae Su-geun, in order to relieve a then marine commander of responsibility, Yonhap News Agency reported.

The marine died on July 19, 2023 after being swept away in a swollen stream during a search mission for victims of heavy rains, without wearing a life vest or other safety equipment.

A military investigation into the case concluded that eight individuals were suspected of occupational negligence resulting in death.

Lee Jong-sup, then Defence minister, had approved the report, but later ordered the probe not to be referred to police, the counsel said.

Col Park Jung-hoon, who had led the Marine Corps investigation into Chae's death, was dismissed from his position after defying Lee's orders.

The special counsel believes that Yoon made unlawful orders to the Defence Ministry and the presidential office at the time, going beyond his presidential authority. Yoon has denied all allegations. - Bernama-Yonhap

Singapore imposes sanctions on four Israelis

SINGAPORE: Financial sanctions will be imposed by Singapore on four Israelis, who will also be barred from entering the city-state, its Foreign Affairs Ministry announced yesterday, accusing them of "egregious acts of extreme violence" against Palestinians in the West Bank.

The ministry said actions committed in the West Bank by Meir Mordechai Ettinger, Elisha Yered, Ben-Zion Gopstein and Baruch Marzel were unlawful and jeopardised the prospects for a two-state solution.

"As a firm supporter of international law and the two-state solution, Singapore opposes any unilateral attempts to change

facts on the ground through acts that are illegal under international law," it said.

The individuals have been previously sanctioned by the European Union.

Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan announced in parliament in September that leaders of Israeli settler groups would be sanctioned.

He chided Israeli politicians who had spoken about annexing parts of the West Bank or Gaza, the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, adding that the so-called E1 settlement project would fragment the West Bank.

Balakrishnan said apart from imposing

sanctions, Singapore would recognise a Palestine state under the right conditions.

Most of the international community considers Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal under international law.

Israel disputes this, citing historical and biblical ties to the area and saying the settlements provide security.

While Singapore and Israel have shared close diplomatic and military ties since the former gained independence in 1965, the city-state last year voted in favour of numerous resolutions expressing support for the United Nations recognition of a Palestinian state. - Reuters

Judge moves to halt troop deployment in Washington

➤ Lawsuit accuses Trump of usurping control of city law enforcement

WASHINGTON: A federal judge on Thursday moved to halt US President Donald Trump's deployment of National Guard troops to Washington DC, a temporary legal setback to Trump's efforts to send the military to American cities over objections of local leaders.

US District Judge Jia Cobb, an appointee of former president Joe Biden, temporarily blocked the Trump administration from

deploying National Guard troops to enforce the law in the nation's capital without approval from its mayor.

However, she paused her ruling until Dec 11 to allow the administration to appeal.

The legal fight is playing out alongside several others across the country as Trump presses against long-standing but rarely tested constraints on presidents using troops to enforce domestic law.

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said Trump acted lawfully and called the lawsuit an attempt to undermine his successful efforts to stop violent crime.

District of Columbia Attorney-General Brian Schwab said permitting Trump to use troops to enforce domestic law would set a

dangerous precedent.

Schwab, an elected Democrat, sued on Sept 4 after Trump announced the deployment on Aug 11.

The lawsuit accuses Trump of unlawfully usurping control of the city's law enforcement and violating a law prohibiting troops from doing domestic police work.

Trump has unique law enforcement powers in Washington, which is not part of any state, but local officials say he overstepped by supplanting the mayor's policing authority and violated legal prohibitions against federal troops doing civilian police work.

Trump administration lawyers called the lawsuit a political stunt in court filings and said Trump is free to deploy troops to Washington

without the approval of local leaders.

The administration has also said the troops are operating lawfully and successfully reducing crime.

Trump has moved to deploy troops in Los Angeles, Chicago and Portland in Oregon to combat what he describes as violent unrest over his crackdown on illegal immigration.

Democratic leaders of those cities and their states have sued to block the deployments, saying they amount to an attempt to punish political foes with militarised shows of force.

Trial courts have ruled against the troop deployments in every city where local leaders protested their presence, although an appellate court has blocked one of those rulings and allowed troops to remain in Los Angeles. – Reuters

Venezuela threatens Nobel laureate against accepting award

CARACAS: Venezuelan's attorney-general said on Thursday Nobel laureate and opposition leader Maria Corina Machado would be considered a "fugitive" if she travels to Norway to accept the peace prize.

Machado, who says she is in hiding in Venezuela, has expressed intention to travel to Oslo for the Dec 10 ceremony.

"By being outside Venezuela and having numerous criminal investigations, she is considered a fugitive," said Attorney-General Tarek William Saab, adding that Machado is accused of "acts of conspiracy, incitement of hatred and terrorism".

Saab said Machado is also under investigation for her support of the US deployment of military forces in the Caribbean.

US President Donald Trump has mobilised the world's largest aircraft carrier, warships and fighter jets with the stated aim of anti-drug operations, but Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said they intend to overthrow his leftist government.

Machado has welcomed the military presence, which has seen strikes on alleged drug boats claim at least 83 lives in the Caribbean and Pacific, and has backed Washington's claim that Maduro heads a drug cartel.

In a video posted to social media on Tuesday, Machado said Venezuela is "on the threshold of a new era". – AFP

Australia adds Twitch to social media ban

SYDNEY: Livestream giant Twitch would be forced to remove all users under the age of 16 when Australia's strict social media laws take effect next month, Canberra's online regulator said yesterday.

From Dec 10, Australia would force social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and

TikTok, to remove users under the age of 16 or face hefty fines.

The eSafety Commissioner said US company Twitch, which started out as a platform for gaming streamers but now hosts live feeds of various genres, met its criteria to be banned.

The platform includes "features designed to encourage user

interaction, including through livestreaming content", it said.

Lifestyle website Pinterest, LegoPlay and WhatsApp would not be banned, but other platforms remain under review.

Twitch said nearly 70% of viewers are aged between 18 and 34, but did not disclose how many are younger.

It does not allow any users under the age of 13.

Australian authorities have reserved the right to force all platforms to comply with the law.

Tech companies have been critical of Australia's ban, describing it as "vague", "problematic" and "rushed". – AFP

UN climate talks delayed by fire outbreak

BELEM: A fire broke out on Thursday inside the United Nations (UN) climate summit venue in Brazil, burning through the roof and causing a panicked evacuation and the suspension of talks entering a crucial phase.

The blaze engulfed pavilions in the summit site in Belem at 2pm (1700 GMT), torching a hole through its fabric ceiling and sparking a rush for the exit as smoke filled the corridors.

It was the third major incident since the COP30 negotiations started last week in the Amazon region, after Indigenous protesters stormed the venue and later blockaded the entrance in a peaceful demonstration.

Security responded "swiftly" and the blaze was controlled in roughly six minutes, COP30 hosts Brazil and UN Climate Change said in a joint statement.

Firefighters and ambulances arrived as smoke billowed from the huge tents and permanent structures hosting tens of thousands of diplomats, journalists and activists for the two-week event.

Nineteen people were treated for smoke inhalation and two for anxiety, the Brazilian presidency of the event said.

Brazil declared the site reopened at 8.40pm after a Fire Department inspection, although plenary sessions will not restart until today.

The area where the blaze broke out was sealed off from view with a vast sheet. People who had left belongings in the affected zone were escorted in one by one to retrieve them, including those who needed to collect passports for flights departing later in



Officials using fire extinguishers to put out the blaze in the Blue Zone at the conference on Thursday. – REUTERS/SPIC

the night.

Emergency medicine physician Kimberly Humphrey, attending COP30 with Doctors for the Environment Australia, was in a meeting when she received alerts of a fire.

Outside she could "smell smoke and burning plastic. There were no alarms, there were no whistles, only people running and yelling

and evacuating".

She found a medical centre where people were being treated for shock and smoke inhalation, and started working with others to help those in need.

"It is not what you expect to happen when you are at a conference.

"It is a combination of terror and not having a good emergency plan, not knowing where the exits are,

but also knowing what I need to do as a doctor and needing to help people too."

The cause of the blaze is being investigated but could have been the result of a short circuit or other electrical malfunction, said Brazilian Tourism Minister Celso Sabino.

"This could have happened anywhere in the world."

Early in the summit, UN Climate

Chief Simon Stiell had complained to Brazil about security, sweltering conditions and faulty air conditioning, and water leaks near light fittings during torrential tropical downpours.

Two women who worked in a pavilion belonging to an international organisation said the facilities had been fitted with makeshift electrical wiring.

There were exposed wires and water dripped from the roof onto their electrical panel, they said on condition of anonymity, adding that they reported the issues, to no avail.

"The operational difficulties just before the start of this COP could have led people to believe this type of incident might occur," a source close to the organisation of the event said, also on condition of anonymity.

The interruption comes at a crucial moment on the second-to-last day of the summit as ministers try to break a deadlock over fossil fuels, climate finance and trade measures.

"It will absolutely delay the process because this is a crucial time, this is the time when we have to decide on the process that started last week," said Indonesian delegation member Windy Laksono.

The talks are stuck over a "roadmap" to transition away from fossil fuels proposed by host Brazil, concerns over weak emissions-reduction plans, finance for developing countries and trade barriers.

On Thursday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told negotiators that "the world is watching" and urged them to reach an "ambitious compromise". – AFP



Long road to recovery for children of Gaza

ISTANBUL: The World Health Organisation (WHO) warned on Thursday that children in Gaza will need far longer to recover from the trauma of two years of violence, despite the temporary calm brought by the current ceasefire, Anadolu Ajansi reported.

Marking World Children's Day, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the pause in fighting has offered "moments of quiet" for children who have endured bombardment, displacement and loss.

"The fragile ceasefire has given children a chance to breathe, connect, play and even start to heal. But trauma, injury, grief and shattered childhoods will take far longer to heal."

He stressed that emotional and physical wounds remain severe even as hostilities subside, adding that the damage to Gaza's health system continues to hinder recovery.

He urged full respect for the ceasefire and called for efforts that lead to "lasting peace" to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Gaza's youngest generation. – Bernama-Anadolu

Laundering network funding Moscow war effort uncovered

► Couriers used to collect criminal cash from drug dealing and firearms trafficking

LONDON: A billion-dollar money laundering network operating across the United Kingdom (UK) purchased a bank in Kyrgyzstan to help Russia evade Western sanctions and channel funds towards the Ukraine war, British police said yesterday.

The network has used hundreds of couriers in at least 28 UK towns and cities to collect criminal cash from drug dealing and firearms trafficking, among others.

The money was then converted into cryptocurrency and moved around the world, Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) said, as it shared an update on the latest phase of the UK-led Operation Destabilise.

The international effort has led to 128 arrests and the seizure of more than £25 million (RM135 million) in cash and cryptocurrency in the UK,

the NCA said.

In the past year, another 45 suspected launderers have been arrested and £5.1 million seized.

Intelligence from the probe has also helped foreign partners seize US\$24 million (RM99 million) and €2.6 million (RM12 million) overseas.

Two Russian-speaking networks, Smart and TGR, are at the heart of a lot of the transfers, the NCA said.

They launder money for transnational crime groups involved in cybercrime, drugs and firearms smuggling, and help Russian clients illegally bypass financial restrictions to invest money in Britain.

During phase two of Operation Destabilise, which began last December, authorities discovered that some of the laundered funds were routed through the bank in

Kyrgyzstan, called Keremet Bank.

This was secretly bought on Dec 25, 2024 by Altair Holding SA, a company linked to TGR boss George Rossi.

Keremet then helped move money for Promsvyazbank, a Russian state-owned bank that supports companies involved in Russia's military-industrial sector, the NCA said.

The US Treasury Department had pointed the finger at Keremet in January for helping the Kremlin evade sanctions.

"For the first time, we are tying drug trades in our community all the way through to the highest levels of organised crime, geopolitics, sanctions evasion, the Russian industrial, military complex and state-linked activity," said NCA Economic Crime deputy director Sal Melki.

The networks operated at "eye-watering scales", he added.

Most of the UK activity relied on couriers who drive around the

country collecting bags of cash and swapping them for cryptocurrency payments, sometimes in car parks by motorways.

The NCA has launched a campaign with posters and online messages in English and Russian posted nationwide, including at motorway service stations, warning couriers that they face long prison sentences for relatively small pay.

"For a few hundred pounds, there is a very good chance you could be going to prison for over five years. Easy money leads to hard time," said Melki.

The NCA believes that couriers are a weak point they can target. However, the threat from networks such as these remains high.

"The NCA has inflicted a serious wound on these organisations. But there are also others like them, and we know that we have got to sustain the pressure. We have got to keep arresting people, prosecuting people, sanctioning people," said Melki. – AFP

US plan 'good' for Russia, Ukraine: White House

WASHINGTON: A US plan backed by President Donald Trump to end the war in Ukraine is "good" for both sides, the White House said on Thursday, rejecting concerns that it echoes many of Moscow's demands.

In the coming days, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky expects to discuss the points with Trump, his office said.

What is known of the plan, reported to contain 28 points, suggests that Ukraine is being asked to concede to Russia's key demands, while appearing to get little in return.

On territory, the plan calls for the "recognition of Crimea and other regions that the Russians have taken", a senior source familiar with the matter said.

Moscow has previously demanded that Ukraine completely withdraw its troops from the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, in exchange for freezing the front line in the southern Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.

Ceding territory in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions that Ukraine still controls could leave Ukraine vulnerable to future attacks by Russia.

The plan also calls for Ukraine to reduce its army to 400,000 personnel, cutting its military by more than half, and give up all long-range weapons the source said.

Other media reports said there would be a complete ban on Western troops being deployed to Ukraine.

The proposal also reportedly includes vague provisions for Ukraine to negotiate security guarantees with the United States and Europe.

Kyiv would pledge never to join Nato, and would not get the Western peacekeepers they have called for, although European warplanes would

be stationed in Poland.

Russia would meanwhile be readmitted to the G8 group of nations and be rewarded with sanctions relief under the plan, which US officials said is still a "working document".

Sanctions would snap back if it invades Ukraine again.

Russia faces few military restrictions under the plan, which only says "it is expected that Russia will not invade neighbouring countries".

Ukraine would also have to hold elections in 100 days, a further Russian demand and one echoed by Trump, who called Zelensky a "dictator without elections" earlier this year.

Trump himself would preside over a "peace council" to oversee the ceasefire, similar to the one proposed for the Gaza truce between Israel and Hamas, according to the plan.

The contents of the plan have fuelled suggestions that Russia was involved in drafting it.

US media outlet Axios reported that it had been drawn up by the Trump administration in secret consultation with Moscow.

Since returning to the White House, Trump's position on the Ukraine war has shifted back and forth.

This year, he has gone from calling Zelensky a "dictator" to urging Kyiv to try to reclaim all the land captured by Russia and hitting Moscow with sanctions.

Ukraine said the United States had told it that the proposal "could invigorate diplomacy".

Zelensky confirmed that the US delegation visiting Kyiv had presented the plan, but did not provide details. – AFP



A Palestinian girl standing amid the debris of a damaged building that was sheltering displaced people in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza on Thursday. – AFPIC

EU pushes Palestinian Authority reform

BRUSSELS: The European Union (EU) pressed on Thursday to bolster reform of the Palestinian Authority, as Brussels hosted 60 delegations to discuss reconstruction and governance in Gaza after the US-brokered peace plan.

"Our aim is to strengthen governance, build a more resilient economy, stabilise finances, improve services for the population and create conditions for future effective governance across all territories," said EU commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Suica.

As part of the efforts, a handful of EU countries signed contributions of more than €80 million

(RM382 million), part of broader support by the bloc worth around €1.6 billion over three years that has already been announced.

"Our financial support is linked to the Palestinian Authority reform agenda, which of course, they committed to implement."

EU Chief Ursula von der Leyen said the bloc is "committed to working towards a Palestinian state with a reformed, well-functioning Palestinian Authority at its core".

"We will continue to support efforts to stabilise the region, including West Bank and Gaza transitional governance."

The Palestinian Authority, which

exercises limited control over parts of the West Bank, insists that it must play a key part in running Gaza in the future.

It has not had a role in Gaza's governance since its rival Hamas seized control of the territory in 2007, although it still provides some services in the territory.

US President Donald Trump's plan suggests allowing a role for the authority in running Gaza once it has completed a set of reforms.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has all but rejected the option of the Ramallah-based authority ruling over post-war Gaza. – AFP



Maybank posts **nine-month** net profit of RM7.84 billion

➤ Up 3.7% year-on-year, net operating income rises 3.2% to RM22.86 billion

PETALING JAYA: Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) announced a net profit of RM7.84 billion for the nine months ended Sept 30, 2025, (9M25) up 3.7% compared to a year earlier.

This was supported by steady net-fund based income performance, higher non-interest income (NoII) and prudent risk discipline across its regional network.

In a statement yesterday, Maybank said net operating income rose 3.2% year-on-year (y-o-y) to RM22.86 billion, supported by its net-fund based income increasing 1.6% y-o-y to RM14.90 billion and NoII which was up 6.3% to RM7.96 billion while net interest margin (NIM) for the nine months was down one basis point to 2.03% compared to a year earlier.

However, Maybank said, it has been able to improve the Q3'25 NIM to 2.02%, up 2bps compared with Q2'25 through proactive liquidity and funding costs management.

The group also said it continued to exercise disciplined cost management during the period, with overhead expenses increasing by 3.8% y-o-y to RM11.18 billion.

The increment however reflects the ongoing strategic investments to support long-term growth and inflationary related adjustments in personnel expenses, alongside increases in marketing cost, IT expenses and credit card-related fees. Despite these planned expenditures, the group maintained a stable cost-to-income ratio of 48.9% which also contributed to a 2.7% rise in pre-provisioning operating profit (PPOP) to RM11.68 billion.

Net impairment provisions for the nine months eased to RM1.25 billion, a 1.5% improvement y-o-y, following the conclusion of a corporate borrower's restructuring exercise and recoveries made for the non-retail portfolio.

The group's net credit charge-off rate improved to 11bps from 26bps in 9M24, on the back of lower loan provisions. Meanwhile, gross impaired loans ratio recorded a modest uptick to 1.32% from 1.26% while loan loss coverage remained healthy at 110.1%. Taken together, these metrics demonstrate that the group's conservative provisioning provides a



Khairussaleh says Maybank maintained a disciplined approach in managing liquidity, funding and credit risks, while continuing to serve customers across all segments. – **BERNAMAPIC**

healthy cover against potential credit volatility while enabling continued support for customers.

President and group CEO Datuk Seri Khairussaleh Ramli said Maybank delivered a steady performance for the quarter despite continued volatility and challenges in the global scene.

The group, he added, maintained a disciplined approach in managing liquidity, funding and credit risks, while continuing to serve customers across all segments.

The sustained asset quality reflects the group's prudent risk management, while its strong current account savings account (Casa) growth and rebounding NIM underscored the positive traction of its deposit and funding strategy, he said.

"As we conclude the final phases of M25+, our focus remains on cementing the structural improvements we have put in place – particularly in productivity, capital efficiency and customer experience. These fundamentals will provide a strong foundation as we transition into our next strategic cycle, where we will continue to build from a position of strength in Islamic and values-based banking, wealth management and trade; enhancing competitiveness to drive sustainable and inclusive growth, reinforcing our position as a purpose-driven regional financial services group."

In the third quarter, Maybank delivered a profit before tax (PBT) of RM3.51 billion, broadly maintained against the previous

quarter, while net profit remained largely unchanged at RM2.62 billion quarter-on-quarter (q-o-q). Encouragingly, net-fund based income continued to improve, rising by 1.5% q-o-q to RM5.01 billion on the back of disciplined asset-liability management. Operating expenses were well-managed, declining by 3.5% q-o-q.

Year-on-year, PBT rose 3.1% while net profit improved 3.3%, reflecting steady bottom-line momentum. Underlying performance was supported by a 3.2% y-o-y increase in net operating income to RM7.46 billion, with net-fund based income and NoII contributing to the uplift by 2.5% and 4.8% respectively. PPOP meanwhile increased 2.8% y-o-y to RM3.81 billion.

The group's loan book grew 2.7% y-o-y to RM681.7 billion as at Sept 30, 2025, led by Malaysia which increased 6% to RM435.2 billion. Singapore loans meanwhile were up 1.5%, while Indonesia was marginally down 0.5%, both year-on-year as Maybank Indonesia continued to rebalance its corporate lending portfolio.

Group deposits recorded solid y-o-y growth, rising to RM739.1 billion from RM706.2 billion, supported primarily by continued strong growth in Casa balances. Total Casa improved to RM295 billion, marking a healthy y-o-y increase of 15.2%. Meanwhile, fixed deposits saw a steady rise to RM358.9 billion, up 4.1% y-o-y, demonstrating resilience in deposit base amid a competitive rate environment.

Matrade leads M'sian mid-tier companies into India's high-growth market

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) has paved new pathways for Malaysian mid-tier companies (MTC) to make further inroads into the high-growth Indian market through a "market immersion mission" to Mumbai from Nov 19 to 21.

In a statement yesterday, Matrade said this initiative aims to deepen engagement with India's dynamic business ecosystem players, unlock new export prospects, and elevate the visibility of Malaysian mid-tier companies in various supply chains.

Four Malaysian MTC participated in the mission, representing high-value sectors including professional services, construction & building materials, and franchising. These sectors highlight Malaysia's strength in technical expertise, value added industrial capabilities, sustainable solutions, and strong consumer services.

This mission, Matrade said, reflects their strong commitment to support Malaysian companies in penetrating high-growth markets such as India.

As a core component of the Mid-Tier Companies Development Programme's (MTCDP) Go-to-Market phase, the mission acts as a flagship platform to assist Malaysian MTCs expand their international presence and enhance their readiness for expansion into major global markets.

Throughout the mission, participating companies engaged with major industry associations and related business entities such as the International Chamber of Investment and Business, Bombay Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Retailers Association of India, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Indo-Global Trade Development Exim CCI, Indian Chambers of Commerce and Maybank India.

Currently the world's fifth-largest economy, India continues to record robust domestic consumption and rapid industrial expansion, presenting Malaysian exporters with a broad spectrum of new opportunities.

In 2024, total trade between both countries was RM83.5 billion, an increase of 10.8% from the previous year.

Malaysia's exports to India reached RM52.1 billion, driven by products such as palm oil and palm oil-based agriculture products, electrical and electronic components, manufactured metals, chemicals and chemical products, and crude petroleum. Imports from India stood at RM31.4 billion, comprising petroleum products, agriculture-related products, chemical and chemical products, manufactured metal, and electrical and electronic products.

Introduced in 2014, the MTCDP is aimed at accelerating the export growth of MTC towards becoming regional and global champions. To date, 394 MTC from various sectors including electrical and electronics, aerospace, automotive, machinery and equipment and oil & gas have benefited from the programme which provides structured guidance, market access, and export development support.

The MTCDP targets export-oriented MTC with annual revenues ranging from RM50 million to RM500 million for manufacturing companies, and RM20 million to RM500 million for services companies.

Eligible mid-tier companies can contact midtier@matrade.gov.my for more information about the programme.

BNM: US\$124.1 billion international reserves as at Nov 14

KUALA LUMPUR: The international reserves of Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) amounted to US\$124.1 billion (RM514.3 billion) as at Nov 14, 2025, compared to US\$123.8 billion as at Oct 31, 2025.

In a statement yesterday, the central bank said the reserves position is sufficient to finance 4.8 months of imports of goods and services and is 0.9 times the total short-term external debt.

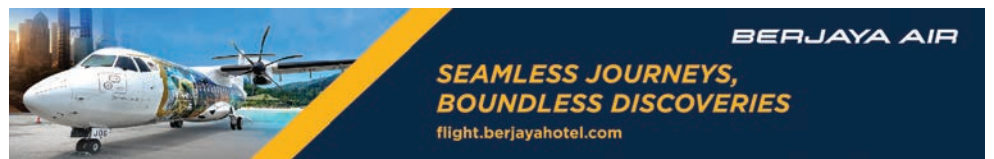
The main components of the reserves were foreign currency reserves (US\$109.6 billion),

International Monetary Fund reserves (US\$1.3 billion), special drawing rights or SDR (US\$5.9 billion), gold (US\$4.8 billion) and other reserve assets (US\$2.5 billion).

Total assets amounted to RM617.78 billion, comprising gold and foreign exchange and other reserves, including SDR (RM522.91 billion), Malaysian government papers (RM13.42 billion), deposits with financial institutions (RM1.24 billion), loans and advances (RM28.13 billion), land, buildings and other fixed assets (RM4.56 billion), and other

assets (RM47.50 billion).

BNM said total capital and liabilities amounted to RM617.78 billion, comprising paid-up capital (RM100 million), reserves (RM203.70 billion), currency in circulation (RM174.31 billion), deposits by financial institutions (RM125.46 billion), federal government deposits (RM9.14 billion), other deposits (RM65.60 billion), Bank Negara papers (RM8.39 billion), allocation of SDRs (RM27.87 billion), and other liabilities (RM3.19 billion). – Bernama



HE Group eyes order book of RM300 million in FY 2026

➤ Electrical engineering solutions company aims to secure higher-value contracts after transfer of its listing to Bursa Malaysia's Main Market

BY HAYATUN RAZAK
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: Electrical engineering solutions provider HE Group is eyeing an order book of RM300 million in financial year 2026, up from its current order book of about RM100 million, on the back of Malaysia's data centre boom, said managing director Haw Chee Seng.

He said the group's tender book currently stands at RM850 million, with more than 80% comprising data centre-related projects. "We can secure much higher-value contracts now that we have Main Market status. This gives investors more confidence, and it also makes it easier for us to raise funds, including sukuk, especially if we pursue PFI (private finance initiative) projects. This will help strengthen our order book," he said at the transfer of its listing to the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia yesterday.

Haw said with the booming data centre sector as well as infrastructure projects and green energy, the company believes the environment next year will be favourable. "I think next year, the performance of our company will be better than this year."

Over the past year, Haw said, it has broadened its participation in Malaysia's digital infrastructure landscape, particularly in the data centre segment.

He pointed out that HE Group secured a RM56.6 million data centre project in Cyberjaya in August. "This project marks a key step in our efforts to support the growing requirements of global and regional operators seeking reliable, scalable and well supported locations for their facilities in Malaysia."

At the same time, Haw said, it has continued to develop its capabilities in the renewable



Haw (third, left) during HE Group's listing transfer ceremony at Bursa Malaysia yesterday. – BERNAMAPIC

energy sector. "Our involvement in a sixty-three megawatt peak large-scale solar development reinforces our contribution to Malaysia's clean energy transition."

He said this initiative positions HE Group to participate more actively in the growing pipeline of solar and green infrastructure projects under the country's long-term energy plans.

"Our focus remains on sustainable value creation, continuous innovation and operational excellence. We are strengthening our internal capabilities and expanding our ability to support critical infrastructure projects that are aligned with Malaysia's economic transformation," he added.

The transfer came less than two years after HE Group's ACE Market debut on Jan 30, 2024.

The initial public offering shares were priced at 28 sen each.

The group said the rapid progression to the Main Market reflects the group's momentum, financial strength and operational performance, positioning it to compete for larger contracts and attract a broader base of institutional investors.

HE Group opened weaker yesterday following the completion of its transfer to the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia.

The stock made its Main Market debut at 36.5 sen, slipping 0.5 sen or 1.35% from its previous closing price of 37 sen on the ACE Market. Early trading was muted, with 140,000 shares changing hands at the open.

The counter closed at 36 sen, down 1 sen or 2.7%, with 653,900 shares traded.

FedEx survey: 87% of Malaysian SMEs report rising trade volumes with Europe

PETALING JAYA: Out of the 30 Malaysian SMEs polled, 87% of them indicated experiencing higher trade volumes with European markets, driven by increased demand for products/services (69%), favourable trade policies (50%) and a focus on new markets in Europe (46%), a clear indication that Europe remains a critical market offering significant growth opportunities for Malaysian businesses.

This was revealed in the Federal Express Corporation (FedEx), one of the world's largest express transportation companies, new survey examining trade trends between Asia-Pacific (Apac) and Europe, covering 13 markets across the region including Malaysia.

The survey showed that European demand is fast becoming a key growth pillar for Malaysian SMEs.

It said: "55% now have at least a quarter of their customer base in Europe, while 97% plan to start or expand trade with Europe in the next one to two years. 93% are reporting an improved outlook over the past year, 16% above the regional Apac average."

FedEx Malaysia managing director Woon Tien Long said, "At FedEx, our focus is to enable Malaysian businesses to stay competitive through digital innovation, simplified customs solutions, and a robust logistics network. As new regulations and trade corridors continue to evolve across Europe, we're turning complexity into practical, seamless solutions, helping Malaysian exporters stay agile and connected to global opportunities."

While optimism is high, 76% of Malaysian SMEs report being affected by global logistics disruptions and shifting regulations. The main barriers to entering European markets include lack of demand, lack of market intelligence, and import taxes and tariffs, while top challenges for businesses already in Europe are import taxes/tariffs and logistics costs.

The United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy emerge as the top markets for Malaysian SMEs.

For 60% of Malaysian SMEs, sustainability considerations play a key role in logistics and supply chain choices when conducting business with European partners, signaling a shift toward greener and more responsible trade practices.

Rise of side gigs: Redefining work, stability and economic freedom

THE nature of work is shifting more rapidly than ever before. Once, stability was defined by a steady job, incremental promotions, and the promise of retirement after decades of service. Today, that model no longer feels secure for many professionals. Rising living costs, economic uncertainty, and an increasingly competitive job market have prompted individuals to rethink what security and success truly mean.



In this evolving landscape, side gigs have moved from the margins into the mainstream. What was once seen as supplementary income or a stopgap measure is now being embraced as a serious and sustainable way to build a real, thriving business, even from the ground up.

Across Malaysia and beyond, professionals are discovering that side gigs and side hustles not only provide financial buffers but also open doors to flexibility, growth and limitless opportunities, leading to long-term reinvention.

The appeal lies in accessibility. Digital tools and global platforms have democratized opportunities once reserved for niche industries. Skills such as digital marketing, funnel design, content creation, and copywriting are no longer the domain of specialists in large firms.

With the right training and guidance, they are within reach of students, stay-at-home parents, and even retirees seeking renewed purpose. In this way, the gig economy is no longer defined by age, background, or gender, but by willingness to learn and deliver value.

Still, scepticism remains. Freelancing has long carried the perception of instability. Yet experience shows that when approached strategically, freelancing can be one of the most reliable and empowering ways to work. The key lies in building credibility, cultivating long-term client relationships, and showing up with

professionalism in a crowded digital marketplace.

When freelancers prioritise quality and ethical delivery over shortcuts and gimmicks, they not only earn repeat business but also position themselves as trusted partners in a fast-changing economy.

Businesses, too, are paying attention. As talent becomes more mobile and employees increasingly pursue flexible alternatives, organisations are beginning to rely on freelancers for specialised expertise and agile support.

With the rise of social media platforms, influencer marketing, and other trends, the focus is now on hiring and retaining freelancers who possess skills in writing, website design, video editing, email marketing, and providing virtual assistance.

This shift forces companies to rethink retention strategies while simultaneously creating new opportunities for collaboration with independent professionals.

The rise of skilled side-gig workers signals

not the erosion of the traditional workforce, but the emergence of a hybrid model where employment and entrepreneurship coexist.

For policymakers, educators, and corporate leaders, the implications are clear. Side gigs are no longer peripheral to the economy. In fact, they are central to how modern careers are built.

They represent not only a way to supplement income but also a pathway to achieving real financial goals, time freedom, location freedom, dignity, and real control in uncertain times. The challenge ahead is not whether this shift will continue, but how individuals and institutions alike will adapt to it.

The future of work is not a question of choosing between stability and independence. It is about recognising that stability itself is being redefined.

And in this new definition, side gigs are not a risk. They are an opportunity.

This article is contributed by Side Gig Accelerator founder Kristy Ting (pic).

LONDON: In earlier times, when investors lost their fortunes in the stock market, they tended to abjure speculation. "Once bitten, twice shy" was the rule. Today, animal spirits are no longer dampened by major financial setbacks. No sooner had the so-called "Everything Bubble" imploded in 2022 than it came roaring back. This time, loose monetary policy was not to blame. Rather, it seems that social networks have created ideal conditions for herding behaviour. At the same time, the technology for speculation has been perfected.

After the dotcom bubble burst in 2000, investors shied away from technology stocks for years. The Federal Reserve's loose monetary policy, intended to alleviate the economic effects of the stock market downturn, inflated a housing boom which collapsed in 2008. During the pandemic, even easier monetary conditions, combined with massive government handouts, created the conditions for a bubble in a variety of asset classes, ranging from contemporary art to special-purpose acquisition companies (SPACs). Millions of amateur traders gathered on Reddit's "WallStreetBets" group to discuss ramping meme stocks such as GameStop, and AMC Entertainment.

This bubble weakened in 2021 and collapsed the following year, after the Fed raised interest rates. The ARK Innovation exchange-traded fund - which owned a portfolio of risky tech stocks - dropped 80% from its peak in early 2021. In the ensuing "crypto winter", the price of bitcoin crashed. However, spring was around the corner. Animal spirits quickly revived. While many of the SPACs never fully recovered, bitcoin and the Nasdaq Composite Index of tech stocks soared to new highs.

Although plenty of excess liquidity created during the pandemic continued to slosh around the financial system, monetary policy was not the prime driver of speculation. The Federal Reserve's effective interest rate remained above 5% for between May 2023 and September 2024, yet the stock market powered forwards. Enthusiasm about artificial intelligence was a big factor. But it also appears that social media has fundamentally transformed the way information is

Social media explains why markets keep going 'crazy'



Digital networks and instant trading tools are making speculation easier - and market swings more dramatic. - UNSPLASH PIX

generated and distributed in a manner that is particularly conducive to the formation of bubbles, regardless of financial conditions.

In his new book, *When Everyone Knows That Everyone Knows: Common Knowledge and the Mysteries of Money, Power and Everyday Life*, the cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker describes how humans arrive at a state of what he calls "common knowledge." According to Pinker, this concept - also known as public knowledge, shared reality and common ground - allows for people to coordinate their activities. It can be communicated directly by public declaration or indirectly through conventions. Words are a form of common knowledge. So is money: a vendor accepts a dollar bill in payment because she knows that the same dollar will be accepted by others.

Pinker believes that the use of electronic media has generated ever wider networks of common knowledge. This seems optimistic.

Online communication has helped to turn language into a battleground, where people avoid certain words for fear of being misconstrued. Universities, the traditional fount of knowledge in Western society, are beset by boycotts and protests. As Pinker admits, the ground between facts and righteousness is blurred. Empirically verifiable claims are often suppressed. Conventions break down. Conspiracy theories run amok. Money is drawn into this vortex of disagreement. What constitutes money - fiat currency, gold or crypto? Your answer depends on which tribe you identify with.

Another recently published book, *The Digital Reversal: Thread-saga of Media Evolution* by Andrey Mir, presents a radically different view to Pinker's. Mir, a self-styled "media ecologist" believes that internet connectivity and social media are transforming civilisation. He claims that we are leaving a world of literary culture and returning to an oral culture - what he styles "digital orality" - where electronically communicated

sentiments predominate.

The old order, Mir suggests, was characterised by the separation of the known from the knower, individualism and a pursuit of absolute truth. The new order involves total immersion in a digitally induced reality and is characterised by tribalism and negotiated truths. In the physical world, the brain was conditioned to seek delayed rewards that required greater efforts, says Mir, while in the digital world "the brain rewires itself, seeking instant rewards for little effort." Our sense of time has been compressed: "In the digital, one can harvest more responses and status affirmation by being early in a viral connection, as if it were a Ponzi scheme."

Pinker's utopia of common knowledge, in which groups unwittingly converge on the wisdom of crowds is long gone. Instead, the digital dystopia described by Mir incubates incessant periods of human folly, as described by Charles Mackay in his classic 1841 book

Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds. In this world it is less surprising that Palantir Technologies is valued at around 100 times its revenue for the last 12 months, or that legions of tech researchers fervently attend the imminent coming of superintelligence, a God-like machine destined to rule over humanity.

At the same time, it has never been easier to speculate. Apps like the one provided by Robinhood Markets offer real-time trading in stocks and cryptocurrencies at the swipe of a screen. It offers prediction markets for sports and election results - eliding the traditional distinction between gambling and speculation - along with "tokenized equities" tracking private companies such as OpenAI and SpaceX. Customers can leverage their bets with margin loans, options and futures. Robinhood reported 27.1 million "funded customers" as of October with total assets of US\$343 billion on its platform, an average of around US\$12,500 per user.

Pinker writes that bubbles end when they run out of greater fools and scepticism sets in. He cites fellow cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter's concept of "reverberant doubt," described as "a cascade, a stampede, in which the tiniest flicker of a doubt has become amplified into the gravest avalanche of doubt."

Brighter people, says Hofstadter, are those who see more clearly than others when there are grounds for fear. They may react early to perceived danger, but at least they escape in time. Those who continue to play the speculative game live by the motto "retire or get retired", popularised on WallStreetBets. For them, the latter outcome is far more probable.

Edward Chancellor is a Reuters Breakingviews contributor.

EDUCATION

FOCUS 2025

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Foxconn expands AI push with OpenAI deal

TAIPEI: Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn and OpenAI announced yesterday an agreement to design and build AI data centre hardware, the latest in a string of infrastructure deals for the US creator of ChatGPT.

Foxconn has seen profits soar as it shifts focus from low-margin iPhone assembly to artificial intelligence (AI) servers that are now in huge demand as firms plough hundreds of billions of dollars into the technology.

Optimism over AI has sent tech company valuations sky-high – leading to fears of a bubble and fuelling recent stock market volatility.

“Demand for critical components in AI infrastructure is already far outpacing supply, and we expect that will only continue,” OpenAI head Sam Altman said yesterday by video link at a Foxconn event in Taipei.

The companies will collaborate on hardware to be manufactured at Foxconn’s US facilities.

“While this initial agreement does not include purchase commitments or financial obligations, OpenAI will have early access to evaluate these systems and an option to purchase them,” an OpenAI statement said.

By some estimates, OpenAI has signed approximately US\$1 trillion (RM4.2 trillion) worth of infrastructure deals in 2025, including a US\$300 billion Oracle deal and a US\$500 billion Stargate project with Oracle and Japan’s SoftBank.

Foxconn and Intrinsic, a subsidiary of Google’s parent Alphabet, also announced yesterday a deal to develop and deploy “intelligent robotics solutions across Foxconn facilities in the US”. No headline figure was given. – AFP

S’pore lifts growth forecast after strong AI-fuelled Q3

SINGAPORE: Singapore lifted its economic growth forecast for 2025 yesterday, buoyed by a stronger third quarter as a surge in demand for AI-related goods powered exports and global trade steadied.

The trade ministry now expects the economy to grow around 4% this year, well above its earlier 1.5-2.5% forecast set in August.

The stronger outlook comes on the back of a 4.2% year-on-year rebound in the third quarter, extending the revised 4.7% growth logged in the second, the ministry said.

Yesterday’s forecast came as markets worldwide have been rattled by growing concerns that an AI-fuelled rally in equity markets may have gone too far, and warnings that the hundreds of billions of investment in the sector may not see returns for some time.

Manufacturing, wholesale trade, and financial services drove Singapore’s third-quarter expansion, the ministry said.

The electronics cluster grew 6.1%, fuelled by a surge in demand for AI-related semiconductors, servers and server components, the ministry said.

Biomedicals, which include pharmaceuticals, expanded 8.9%.

Growth in the wholesale trade sector was largely from robust sales volumes in machinery equipment, which is also related to strong world demand for AI-related electronics, the ministry added. – AFP

Bitcoin bears surge as sub-US\$90,000 bets rise

➤ Hedging activity jumps as BTC retreats sharply and volatility accelerates

NEW YORK: The likelihood of bitcoin (BTC) ending the year below US\$90,000 (RM373,990) has risen to 50%, according to online options platform Derive.xyz, as traders ramped up hedging against more declines in the world’s largest cryptocurrency.

On the other hand, the options market has assigned just a 30% chance of bitcoin finishing 2025 above US\$100,000.

Bitcoin was last down 4.2% at US\$86,681.41 on Thursday, after earlier falling to a seven-month low. It rose to an all-time peak of US\$126,223.18 in early October. So far this year, bitcoin has fallen more than 7%, on track for an annual decline – the first since 2022.

Bitcoin has also dropped below its 50-day and 200-day moving averages and has fallen out of favour with trend-following investors, analysts said.

“The BTC price is currently very tenuous and skewed to the downside,” said Sean Dawson, head of research at Derive.xyz in Canberra, Australia.

“Previous bull drivers like lowered rates ... have fizzled out, stalling upward price momentum. In other words, there’s very little to be bullish about on the horizon.”

Dawson estimated that over the last 30 days, crypto liquidations in both long and short positions totaled US\$8.25 billion.

One of the main catalysts for the decline in bitcoin has been the less dovish stance of several Federal Reserve officials, who are advising caution on further interest rate cuts and citing still-too-high inflation. This has diminished expectations of a rate cut next month and has weighed on bitcoin and other risk assets such as stocks.

He added that “a powderkeg of volatility in tech valuations” could see bitcoin sink to US\$75,000 before the end of the year, although prices should quickly rebound from that level.

Derive.xyz also pointed to a sizeable concentration of bitcoin “puts,” about 13,800 contracts, conferring the right to sell bitcoin at a strike price of US\$85,000 at the Dec 26 expiry. A put option gives the holder the right, but not the obligation, to sell bitcoin at a set strike price.

The trade reflects demand for downside protection if bitcoin falls below US\$85,000.

To be sure, some market participants believe a turnaround in bitcoin is not far behind.

Sean Farrell, head of digital asset strategy at Fundstrat, wrote in his latest note that the “near-term risk/reward now looks more balanced.” He said that even if this proves to be an unsustainable turn, conditions are ripe for a sharp bounce in bitcoin.

Farrell said oversold signals are now starting to flash after bitcoin hit a seven-month low below US\$90,000, calling it a “potential value zone” that could attract buyers. He also said the latest selloff had cleared the market of last week’s “forced and motivated sellers.”

That said, other options indicators are flashing bearish signals.

Bitcoin’s so-called call-put “skew” has taken a beating. The call-put skew, which reflects market sentiment, refers to the difference in implied volatility between calls, which are options to buy, and puts, which are options to sell. This skew shows a preponderance of puts over calls.

The 30-day put skew has further dropped from -2.9% to -5.3%, which means traders are increasingly paying up for downside insurance as prices continue to soften.

Options volatility across the board has also spiked, according to Derive.xyz’s Dawson. Thirty-day implied volatility has jumped from 41% to 49% in just two weeks and long-term volatility – 180 days – has increased to 49% from 46%.

This surge in volatility underscores the uncertainty surrounding bitcoin’s trajectory, a point that resonates with some bearish voices in the market.

Jack Janasiewicz, portfolio manager and lead portfolio strategist at Natix Investment Managers Solutions, said his bearish view rests on bitcoin’s utility and mass adoption even as he acknowledged its increasing institutional acceptance.

“Can you really buy coke with bitcoin down the street? Sure you can allocate 1% or 2% of your portfolio to bitcoin in case it goes to US\$1 million,” he said.

But if it goes to zero, an allocation of 1-2% is not a big loss, he added. – Reuters



Investors ramp up protection as bitcoin tumbles to its lowest levels in months. – UNSPLASH PIX

Bitcoin’s swings typical of major assets: Binance CEO

SYDNEY: Binance CEO Richard Teng said yesterday bitcoin’s sharp drop in the past month was the result of investors deleveraging cryptocurrency holdings and risk aversion in line with that seen in most major asset classes.

Bitcoin, the world’s most valuable cryptocurrency, has fallen 21.2% in November, raising losses over the past three months to 23.2% as chances increase that it will end the year below US\$90,000 (RM373,990).

The fall comes after bitcoin hit an all-time peak above US\$126,000 in early October.

“As with any asset class, there are always different cycles and volatility. What you’re seeing is not only happening to crypto prices,”

Teng said at a media roundtable in Sydney yesterday.

“At this point in time, there’s a bit of risk (off) and deleveraging happening as well.”

Global markets sold off this week, with investors rattled by an AI-led valuation bubble and the possibility that it could burst. So far, better-than-expected earnings from Nvidia Corp have failed to quell those worries.

Teng said despite the decline, bitcoin is trading at more than double its level in 2024, when institutions like BlackRock began launching crypto investments and products.

“Over the past 1.5 years, the crypto sector has performed very, very well, so it’s not unexpected

that people do take profit,” Teng said.

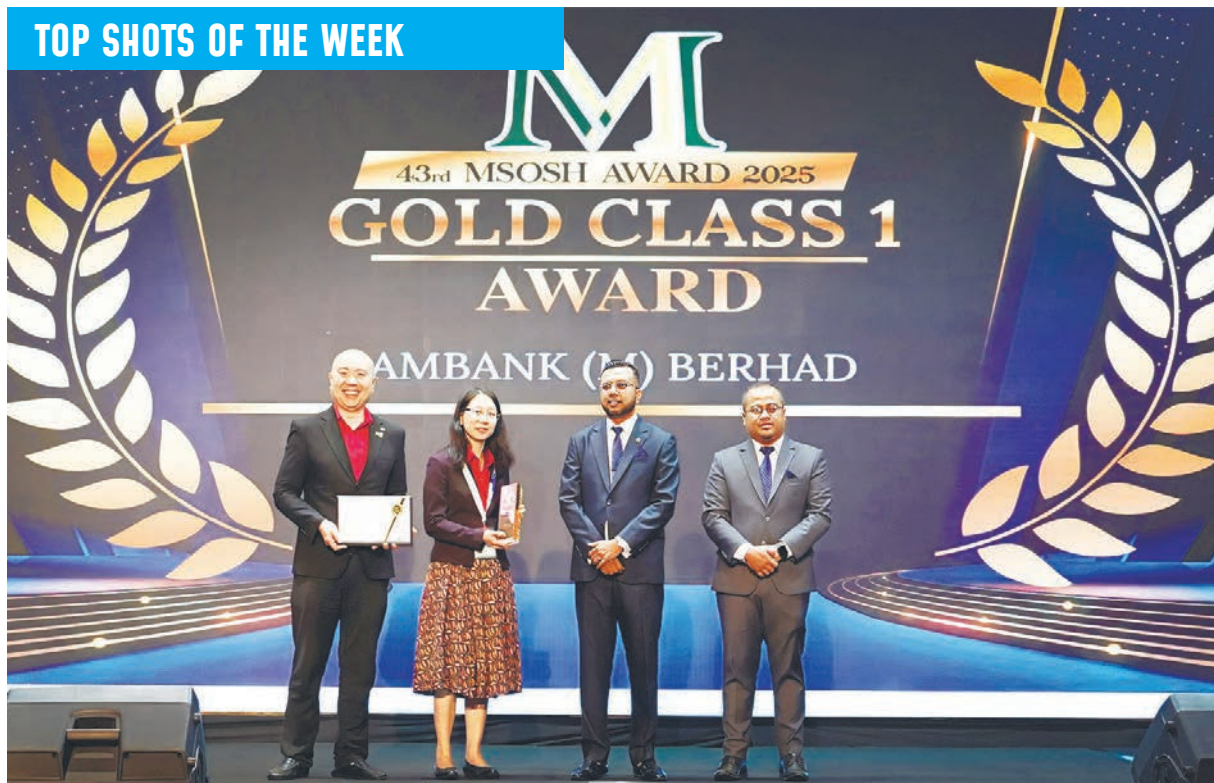
“Any consolidation is actually healthy for the industry, for the industry to take a breather, find its feet.”

Teng declined to comment on whether Binance founder Changpeng Zhao would return to the exchange after he was pardoned by US President Donald Trump in October.

Zhao, a citizen of Canada who was born in China, paid a US\$50 million fine and served nearly four months in prison last year after pleading guilty to violating US money laundering laws.

Zhao was replaced by Teng in 2023 as CEO. – Reuters

TOP SHOTS OF THE WEEK



TOPS IN SAFETY ... AmBank Group has been honoured with the Malaysian Society for Occupational Safety and Health (MSOSH) OSH Gold Class 1 Award for 2025 under the services sector. The recognition, equivalent to a Very Good OSH Performance Rating, was granted after a stringent and comprehensive auditing process conducted by MSOSH. AmBank Group head of administration Vincent Chew (left) and chief financial officer Phua Shok Cheng received the award on behalf of the bank.



BULLISH COLLABORATION ... Webull Malaysia, a subsidiary of Nasdaq-listed Webull Corporation, on Wednesday announced a strategic partnership with AHAM Asset Management Bhd to launch Moneybull, a cash management solution that allows investors to maximise returns on their idle or uninvested cash, while retaining full liquidity. AHAM Asset Management managing director Datuk Teng Chee Wai (left) receiving a token of appreciation from Webull Malaysia CEO Kenneth Chan symbolising the commencement of their partnership.



LET'S GO GREEN ... Chin Hin Group Bhd on Monday launched its inaugural Chin Hin Green Day 2025, a flagship event that demonstrates the group's strengthened commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainable value creation across its businesses. The event at Menara Chin Hin brought together experts and partners from the environmental, social and governance sector and the built environment to exchange ideas, share innovations and reaffirm collective action towards a greener future. From left: Chin Hin Group managing director Datuk Wira Chiau Haw Choon, Malaysian Institute of Architects deputy president Dexter Koh Yew Peng, ESG Association of Malaysia president and Cognitive Digital Sdn Bhd CEO Prof Cheah Kok Hoong, Malaysia Green Building Council CEO Mitch Gelber and GreenRE executive director and Malaysia Green Building Council council member Ashwin Thurairajah.



EYECARE INITIATIVE ... Hoya Malaysia on Wednesday concluded its nationwide 'A Million Visions Campaign', reaffirming its long-term commitment to safeguarding the vision of Malaysia's future generations. Held in conjunction with World Sight Day 2025, the week-long initiative offered free eye examinations for children aged 5 to 12 at over 800 participating eyecare professional optical stores across the country. From left: Sekolah Sri UCSI Kuala Lumpur Campus principal Dr Wong King Tung, Hoya Malaysia head of marketing Nigella Ngo and managing director Lew Chee Quin, and UCSI University lecturer Esther Lau Siew Sieng at the closing ceremony of the campaign.



DIGITAL, AI PACTS ... Johor Capital Group (JCG), a newly established entity under Johor Corporation (JCorp) on Thursday signed memorandums of understanding (MoU) with Hong Kong-based HGC Global Communications Ltd and Legan Group. The MoU with HGC establishes a partnership to develop integrated digital infrastructure under the East-West Gateway Project. The MoU with Legan Group is for collaboration in the ownership, development and operation of next-generation data centres and AI data centres in Malaysia, particularly in Johor. From left: JCorp director of patient capital division and JCG group managing director Datuk Mahadhir Aziz, JCG director of finance Mariam Puan, JCorp president and CEO and JCG chairman Datuk Syed Mohamed Syed Ibrahim, HGC vice-president Malaysia, international business Latipah Mohd Sani, and HGC senior vice-president, international business and digital infrastructure Ravindran Mahalingam.



AUTOSHOW EXPANSION ... The Malaysia Automotive Robotics & IoT Institute (MARii) is expanding the footprint of the Malaysia Autoshow series to more regions in the country, starting with Penang and Johor. The Penang Autoshow 2026 is scheduled for May, followed by the Johor Autoshow 2026 in August. These regional editions will bring manufacturers, technology providers and mobility solutions directly to local communities. At a recent ceremony in Kuala Lumpur to announce this are (from left) Penang Waterfront Convention Centre marketing and sales director Aainaa Zulkiflie, Johor State Economic Planning Division assistant secretary Nurfarahin Zahiridin, MARii chairman Datuk Dr Aminar Rashid Salleh (centre), MARii deputy CEO Nizmar Mohd Nazar and Malaysia Autoshow project director Melvin Lee.



PREMIER PEERS ... Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim with his counterpart Dr Abiy Ahmed Ali on the first day of an official visit to Ethiopia. – **BERNAMAPIC**



COLOURFUL CRAFT ... Visitors participate in a textile workshop during the 'Enchanting Cultural Festival' held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre Mall. – **ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THE SUN**



POLLS PARTY ... Barisan Nasional supporters rally for their candidates during the 17th Sabah State Election Nomination Day at Dewan Sri Sulaman. – **BERNAMAPIC**



TRANQUIL TITANS ... Visitors interacting with elephants at the AFamosa Safari Wonderland Melaka theme park.



DRESSED TO IMPRESS ... Participants of the Larian Hari Keputeraan Sultan Perak event wearing colourful pyjama and cowboy themed outfits at Dataran Pavillion in Kuala Kangsar. – **BERNAMAPIC**



SUCCESS STORY ... Kerachut Beach Turtle Conservation Centre staff release a 15-year-old female Olive Ridley sea turtle after a year-long rehabilitation effort. – **PIC COURTESY OF PEJABAT PERIKANAN PULAU PINANG FACEBOOK PAGE**



GRAND GARB ... Indigenous residents at the 'Great People's March' on the sidelines of the COP30 UN Climate Change Conference in Belem, Para State in Brazil. – **AFPPIC**



STRIKE STRUGGLE ... A demonstrator clashes with police at a rally against the government of Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum in Guadalajara, Jalisco state. – **AFPPIC**



the park. – **ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN**



JOYFUL JIG ... Women dressed in vibrant outfits take part in the National Dancing Masks Festival in Coscomatepec de Bravo, Veracruz state in Mexico. – **AFPPIC**



GAME OF GRIT ... Palestinian amputees compete in a soccer match in Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip. – **REUTERSPIC**



CREATIVE CRUISE ... A woman pushes two children in a basin through floodwaters in the Nonthaburi province on the outskirts of Bangkok. – **REUTERSPIC**

When a house is no longer a home

A HOUSE, by its very name, promises sanctuary. It is where we build memories, where laughter ricochets off walls and where we shelter when storms come. Yet, when conflict rages, that house can collapse not just physically but emotionally and spiritually, and the home can cease to exist.

Two weeks ago, heartbreak arrived on our shores: a wooden boat carrying Rohingya refugees from Myanmar capsized near the Malaysia-Thailand maritime border, close to Tarutao Island, just north of Langkawi. The vessel was one of three originally part of a larger "mother ship" believed to hold around 300 people.

According to Malaysian authorities, the small boat that went down had about 70 people on board. Rescue teams recovered 36 bodies – 29 in Malaysian waters, seven in Thai waters – before officially suspending the search. Only 14 people survived. The rest remain unaccounted for and uncertainty hangs in the air like smoke.

These are more than statistics; they are lives – mothers, fathers, children, grandparents – people who risked everything, who gambled on a fragile vessel because they believed there was something better beyond the horizon. They believed in Malaysia.

So they climbed into rickety boats, paid traffickers, handed over their last ringgit or kyat and prayed that the sea would grant them mercy. They held on to hope, to each other, to floating debris as waves tossed them like driftwood. They left behind their villages and grandparents and the only life they had ever known all for a

POTTU ON POINT
BY HASHINI KAVISHTRI



shot at survival.

People don't abandon their houses because the rent went up; they abandon their houses when their houses stop being homes.

For many of us, Malaysia is home. It may not be perfect but it is still familiar.

We complain about the rising cost of living, we fight online over politics and we roll our eyes at traffic jams that begin before sunrise. Yet, beneath it all, we know we belong here. We know that when disaster strikes, we have systems – however flawed – relatives, neighbours and institutions that catch us when we fall. But for the refugees on that boat, home was not comfort; it was a place of conflict and a threat. And home was the place they had to run from.

For them, Malaysia is not a place for vacation, not a shortcut nor an economic strategy; it is survival. They have heard stories of our construction sites, restaurants and plantations. They know that Malaysia, for all its imperfections, is safer than where they come from. They are not seeking luxury; they are just seeking life.

A home is not just a house; it is a memory wrapped in daily routine. It is also about the language, family and history. It is the familiar smell of meals, the shared grief of loss and the solidarity of neighbours.

As Malaysians, we are no strangers to loss; we know what it means to pick up the pieces when disaster strikes. When there are floods, landslides or accidents – we rally and neighbours help. Even strangers ask, "Can I help?" We take in the vulnerable and the displaced because we know a community is stronger when no one is left behind.

In this tragedy, our compassion is



For those souls on that boat, this was never about wealth; it was about survival, it was about believing that somewhere else still cares. – AFPPIIC

not just a moral one; it is essential. We must not reduce refugees to problems or burdens. They are not "illegal" shadows; they are people in crisis, desperate for shelter. They are mothers shielding their children from drowning; they are families clinging to hope. They deserve dignity.

We also must acknowledge the difficult questions. How do we balance the country's capacity with its compassion? How do we uphold national security while honouring our humanity? These are not easy trade-offs. Fear may knock at our door but it should never be the one to speak; let empathy answer instead.

Malaysia may not be able to save everyone but having limits does not mean closing our hearts; it means working collectively with NGOs, partners and neighbours to offer safer pathways, fairer protections and more humane responses.

For those souls on that boat, this was never about wealth; it was about survival, it was about believing that somewhere else still cares. They came seeking a house, not bricks and mortar, but a place of belonging. They believed Malaysia could be that place – even for a moment.

Today, as we process the terrible news, we must ask ourselves: What kind of country do we want to be?

One that looks away or one that reaches out? One that judges those who flee or one that remembers what it means to need help?

If someone knocks on our door because their house has burned down, do we slam it shut or do we open it long enough to say: "You are safe here. For now, you belong."

As a Malaysian and as a mother, I choose to open that door because we may not be able to save every life but we owe those who reach out for mercy the kindness of our humanity.

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

COMMENT by Ong Tze Chin

Paying a high price for 'bad' influence

SOCIAL media influencer marketing has had a powerful impact on how consumers perceive and engage with brands.

By leveraging personal connection and authenticity, influencers can shape opinions, drive trends and influence purchasing decisions more effectively than traditional advertising.

Influencer advertising is powerful because it merges the personal touch of social connection with the persuasive force of marketing, allowing brands to reach audiences in authentic and engaging ways.

Their ability to communicate directly with followers creates a sense of trust and relatability, making promotions feel more genuine and persuasive. This allows businesses, especially smaller brands, to reach highly targeted audiences at a relatively low cost.

However, the rise of influencer marketing has also blurred the line between personal recommendation and paid promotion, raising concerns about transparency, ethics and consumer manipulation.

Recently, the rise of fraud, scams, promotion of unregulated or illegal

offers, deep-fakes and identity misuse in fraudulent influencer marketing has resulted in significant financial losses for consumers, damaged brand reputations and eroded public trust in online marketing and social media platforms.

Despite the lack of clear regulations specifically governing social media influencers and the limited accountability of online platforms, issues such as misleading or deceptive conduct, false representation and unfair practices are regulated under the Consumer Protection Act 1999.

Under Part II of the Consumer Protection Act 1999, several sections govern these practices: Section 9 governs misleading conduct, Section 10 addresses false and misleading representation, Section 12 concerns misleading indication as to price, Section 13 covers bait advertising, Section 14 relates to gifts, prizes, free offers and similar promotions, Section 15 pertains to claims that goods are limited, Section 16 handles demanding or accepting payment without intending to supply and Section 17 addresses future services contracts.

Besides that, under Section 18 of

"However, the rise of influencer marketing has also blurred the line between personal recommendation and paid promotion, raising concerns about transparency, ethics and consumer manipulation."

the Consumer Protection Act 1999, it is a presumed liability that conduct or representation in relation to any goods or services made or published in an advertisement shall be deemed to have been made by (a) the person who directly or indirectly claims to supply the goods or services; (b) the person on whose behalf the advertisement is made; or (c) both of them.

Basically, no person in Malaysia shall engage in misleading or deceptive conduct, false representation and unfair practices, and doing so is an offence under Section 25 of the Consumer Protection Act 1999.

If the person is a corporate body, Section 25(1)(a) provides that the person committed shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding RM250,000, and for a second and subsequent offence, to a fine not exceeding RM500,000.

For an individual who engages in misleading or deceptive conduct, false representation and unfair practices, they shall be liable to a fine not exceeding RM100,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or both, and for a subsequent offence, to a fine not

exceeding RM250,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six years or both under Section 25(1)(b).

The Act clearly covers social media influencer marketing but there is a lack of enforcement by the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry, which has resulted in minimal oversight, weak deterrence against unethical practices and continued misuse of influencer platforms for misleading or deceptive promotions.

Despite the ministry receiving 2,608 complaints in 2023 for misleading advertising and 1,281 complaints in 2022, no one has been convicted under the relevant sections of the Consumer Protection Act 1999.

While the Bukit Aman Criminal Investigation Department and the Communications and Multimedia Commission face challenges in their enforcement, coordinated enforcement efforts led by the ministry should be prioritised to safeguard Malaysian consumers.

Dr Ong Tze Chin is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Universiti Malaya. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com



Epicurean Xmas feasting

Festive spread to tantalise your tastebuds. — P20

WEEKLY FOCUS

MONDAY

Technology and social media

TUESDAY

Family and parenting

WEDNESDAY

Fashion and beauty

THURSDAY

Home and living

FRIDAY

Travel and leisure

SATURDAY

Food and beverage

INSIDE

p22

Heirloom tomatoes in spotlight for quality

p23

Gastronomic 'time travel' taking diners to early China

p25

Johan As'ari on stage, singing of illicit romance



SCAN ME

JOLLY FOODIE CORNER



Ora king salmon 'Escabeche' plated for one.

A Ramsay Christmas

The Festive A La Carte Menu starts at the price of RM228, featuring a selection of beef consommé or steamed king crab chawanmushi, pate en croûte, grilled hokkaido scallops, Ora king salmon "Escabeche", roast wagyu prime rib, bronze turkey Wellington, seared Japanese flounder, langoustine agnolott and for dessert between the Christmas pudding or the Bomb Alaska.



A La Carte menu, tailor-made for the festivities.



Dining with a view and meal courses to choose from.

Maria's SteakCafe & Suria KLCC

Perfect for a table of five, Maria's SteakCafe Christmas delivery menu starts from RM780 and features six festive spreads to choose from. Each set showcases a selection of signature mains including wagyu MB7 or black angus MB3 tomahawk, angus beef Wellington (with or without foie gras), sides of caesar salad to accompany roast lamb and roast turkey, spaghetti chicken bolognese, roasted potatoes, creamed spinach and the typical bread and butter pudding for a sweet finish. For an extra touch of indulgence, you can add sea-caught tiger prawns or New Zealand lamb cutlets, perfect for making your feast even more memorable. Available until Jan 4, 2026.

The Christmas set dine-in experience



Variety of options and hearty portions make a memorable meal.



Maria's SteakCafe & Suria KLCC presenting a scrumptious Christmas spread.

begins with a pan-seared scallop paired with tomato and olive salsa, followed by a hearty roasted pumpkin soul. The meal concludes on a sweet note with Maria's signatory bread and butter pudding. The main selections feature a range of exceptional cuts for steak lovers from Australian wagyu MB7 tomahawk and MB7-MB9 ribeye to angus beef Wellington with foie gras, as well as premium options including Japanese wagyu A5 Miyazaki, Japanese Kobe A5 and the Korean MiGyeongSan Hanwoo 1++. The restaurant also offers New Zealand lamb cutlet, grilled salmon fillet, Atlantic white cod, lobster thermidor and roast turkey, ensuring there's something to please every festive craving. The dine-in set is priced from RM130 and available on Dec 24 and 25.

Thyme's holiday buffets

From traditional Christmas roasts and handcrafted desserts to freshly shucked oysters and seafood on ice, each buffet is a feast to remember throughout December. The promotion features a buffet hi-tea (available on Saturdays and Sundays at RM168 for adults and RM84 for children),

buffet dinner (Mondays to Thursdays at RM168 for adults and RM84 for children), Christmas Eve seafood buffet dinner (priced at RM298 for adults and RM149 for children), Christmas day buffet brunch (priced at RM228 for adults and RM114 for children) and Christmas day seafood dinner feast (priced at RM298 for adults and RM149 for children).



Buffet style dining at Thyme, all through December.

Festive season at The Park

Perched high on the 75th floor, guests can indulge in exceptional gastronomy. Each offering, designed for the coming together of friends, family and loved ones, in a setting that exudes the spirit of celebration. The festive set lunch is a two-course or three-course set menu that is available throughout December. Highlights include coconut lobster bisque, braised angus beef cheek and pan-fried barramundi.

Seafood and vegetarian options are also available, while desserts feature timeless favourites such as Mont Blanc and roasted apple crumble sundae.

The Christmas eve dinner set menu is a seven-course meal featuring Chef Che's selection of

amuse bouche, lightly smoked salmon with horseradish, parsley dressing and a rich lobster soup. The fish course showcases Atlantic cod with truffle jus and brown butter, followed by a palate cleanser before the mains: grilled wagyu with seasonal vegetables and fermented green pepper sauce or dry-aged duck breast with sweet potato purée, foie gras and currants.

Christmas day lunch is a four-course feast starting with lightly smoked salmon with horseradish and parsley dressing and signature lobster soup. For mains, choices are grilled wagyu with seasonal vegetables and fermented green pepper sauce or dry-aged duck breast with sweet potato puree, foie gras and currants. A slice of Merdeka Grill festive cheesecake concludes the meals on Christmas eve and Christmas day.



Festive cheese log served at Sunset Terrace

Sunset Terrace's Christmas buffets

Celebrate the season with a sumptuous spread featuring showstoppers such as turducken, baby lamb ribs with chestnut glaze, festive cheese log and pate en croûte, alongside salads, appetisers and international favourites that make a celebration of flavours to suit every traveller on this culinary voyage. Guests can indulge in an assortment of handcrafted desserts, from the nostalgic yule log and buttery mincemeat pies to delicate Christmas cookies, festive pastries and dazzling chocolate creations. The festive lunch buffet on weekdays is available until Dec 30, priced at RM158 for adults and RM79 for children and senior citizens, on weekends is available at RM208 per adult and RM104 for children and senior citizens, which also includes a gingerbread decorating programme.

The festive dinner buffet (available until Dec 30, excluding Christmas eve and day) is priced at RM228 per adult and RM114 per child and senior citizen.

The Christmas eve dinner buffet, Christmas day lunch buffet and Christmas day buffet is priced at RM258 per adult and RM129 per child and senior citizen with lively programmes to set the festive mood including a live band, Christmas carollers, face painting and gingerbread decorating.



Handcrafted Christmas desserts, from yule log to dazzling chocolate creations.

From ancient loaves to today's tables

Antique bread culture of Turkiye

IN Turkiye, bread graces every table — from village kitchens to city restaurants and cafes. However, bread is more than a staple favourite, it is a living heritage in these lands. Bread's deep-rooted tradition in Anatolia, one of the earliest cradles of settled life, stretches back thousands of years, and every archaeological discovery across Turkiye adds a new chapter to its ancient story. The remains of loaves and bread-making artefacts unearthed across Turkiye offers tangible evidence of a culinary culture nurtured and refined for a millennium.

Archaeological finds trace world's oldest bread traditions to Anatolia

Recent archaeological discoveries across Anatolia are revealing the ancient origins of bread-making, offering new insights into Turkiye's rich culinary heritage. At Konya's Unesco-listed site of Catalhoyuk, archaeologists discovered an 8,600-year-old leavened bread around the remains of a severely damaged oven. Dated to around 6600 BCE, this bread



Gozleme with herbs.

is considered one of the oldest ever discovered. Similarly, at Eskisehir's Kulluoba Mound, experts unearthed what is believed to be the world's oldest leavened and baked bread, dating back 5,000 years. Analyses of the Kulluoba bread revealed traces of emmer wheat and lentils. The bread is thought to have been baked at 140°C, a piece of it was intentionally broken off, burnt as part of a fertility ritual, and then buried near the threshold of a room in the back of a house. This remarkable discovery demonstrates how production and belief practices were deeply

intertwined in the social life of that period.

On the other hand, excavations at Topraktepe (Eirenopolis) Ancient City in Karaman revealed five carbonised loaves dating to the 7th–8th centuries CE. Experts believe these loaves may have been sacramental breads, used during early Christian rituals. Another archaeological discovery revealed a bread mould with a diamond (baklava) pattern at the Harran ruins in Turkiye's anliurfa, one of the world's oldest settlements. Believed to have been crafted some 800 years ago, the mould provides a new clue about how people used to prepare their daily bread.

Countless baked treasures, from fluffy breakfast pastries to hearty loaves

These ancient discoveries shed light on Anatolia's deep-rooted bread and pastry culture. With a history reaching back a millennium, Turkiye's bread tradition still thrives today in a rich variety across the country. Traditional bakeries and home bakers still lovingly craft dozens of bread and pastry varieties, using locally inspired ingredients. You might enjoy a leisurely breakfast in the Black Sea region with golden corn flour bread, savour steaming soups with tandoor bread in Eastern Anatolia, or pair "bazlama" with hearty stews in Central Anatolia. Turkiye's bread culture is as diverse as its geography.

Turkiye's iconic flatbread: Pide

In Turkiye, classic somun bread is served at every meal, yet across the country, dozens of regional breads reflect local ingredients, climate and centuries of tradition. For example, "pide", a thick flatbread typically baked in wood-fired stone ovens, is another type of bread you will frequently come across. Pide can take on various forms, including "turnak pide", "tombik pide" or Ramadan pide, depending on its preparation and serving style. It even transforms into a delicious pastry when prepared with various toppings from cheese and spinach to sauteed meat and minced lamb. Its enduring appeal



Borek with minced meat.

has made it so cherished that from bustling metropolises like Istanbul to quaint small towns, dedicated pide restaurants can be found at every turn.

Turkiye's Unesco-listed traditions: lavash and yufka

The two other types of bread, lavash and yufka, also hold an important place in Turkish food culture. For centuries, the preparation of these breads in Anatolia has been a communal activity for women, who roll out thin sheets of dough for winter storage or for special occasions, such as weddings. And the unique tradition of making lavash and yufka was inscribed on Unesco's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016. Lavash, a type of flatbread, is typically paired with succulent kebabs. Doner, spicy "cigkofte" (a vegan meatball), and other grilled specialities are often wrapped in soft, flavourful lavash, creating irresistible "durum". Yufka,



Yufka made fresh.

thinner than lavash, is commonly enjoyed at breakfast with cheese, showcasing its simple yet timeless appeal. Even baklava, the national dessert of Turkiye, consists of paper-thin layers of yufka.

Bread has been part of Anatolian life and culture since prehistoric times, and in Turkiye, you can explore its history in depth.



Borek with cheese.

TASTY RECIPE

Asam Pedas Sardine

Ingredients

425g Ayam Brand Sardine in Tomato Sauce
180g Ayam Brand Asam Pedas Paste
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 onion, sliced
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 thumb-sized piece of ginger, minced
1 tomato, chopped
1 cup tamarind juice (or tamarind paste mixed with water)
2 cups water
1-2 red chillies, sliced (optional)
1 tablespoon sugar (adjust to taste)
Salt to taste
Fresh cilantro for garnish (optional)

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a pot. Saute onion, garlic, and ginger until soft.
2. Stir in Asam Pedas Paste and cook briefly. Add tomato and cook until soft.
3. Pour in tamarind juice and water.



Ayam Brand's asam pedas paste for a flavourful asam pedas everytime

Bring to a boil.

4. Add mackerel. Simmer for 10–15 minutes until fish is cooked.
5. Adjust salt and sugar to taste. Add red chillies if desired.
6. Garnish with cilantro and serve with rice.



Asam pedas prepared simple, bringing complex flavours to your table.



Ayam Brand's sardines makes a hearty meal



A REFRESHING RETREAT
NEAR KUALA LUMPUR
colmartropicale.com.my



Italian canned tomatoes are also presented as an alternative to fresh tomatoes, offering long shelf life and preserved taste and texture.



Criber's cooking demonstration showcases the adaptability of Italian processed tomatoes across cuisines.



Mancini linguine with Italian processed tomato.

The initiative celebrates the rich heritage and culinary significance of tomatoes processed in Europe — particularly Italy — while also showcasing their traceability, safety and quality. The campaign also highlights their nutritional value, as tomatoes are naturally rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants essential to a balanced and healthy diet.

European tomatoes processed in Italy are a symbol of worth and pride, deeply rooted in Italian culture and cuisine. We aim to share the true taste and adaptability of these products, which continues to be a cornerstone of Mediterranean gastronomy. Food, culture and creativity are powerful bridges between Malaysia and Italy, and we are proud to see this collaboration get attention," said ITA Kuala Lumpur trade commissioner Dr Angela Donvito.

The cooking demonstration, led by executive chef Stefano Criber and chef Thayalan Tharuma Rajah, highlighted the adaptability of Italian tomatoes beyond Mediterranean cuisine. Participants experienced how these ingredients elevate both Western and Asian dishes with decadence, tint and flavour.

The campaign also emphasises Southeast Asia's growing importance as a market for Italian tomato products. Imports to Singapore (€3.9 million), Thailand (€3 million) and Malaysia (€2.7 million) are steadily rising, reflecting annual growth rates of 5.67%, 15.3% and 11.47% respectively. These figures underline the region's increasing demand for Italian food products and the expanding opportunities for collaboration.

Sweet, red passion

» Celebrating taste, quality, heritage of European processed tomatoes

EUROPEAN tomato is an essential ingredient in Mediterranean and international cuisine, valued for its versatility and unique flavour.

Originally from South America, it was introduced to Europe after colonisation and found its ideal home in the Italian sun kissed fields where it grew into becoming a key element in dishes such as pizza and pasta.

European tomatoes, particularly the Italian variety, is recognised for its flavour. Grown in Italian soil under the Mediterranean climate

which contributes to its flavour, it develops a sweet and intense taste that makes it ideal for all types of culinary preparations, including Asian.

The Italian Trade Agency (ITA) Kuala Lumpur, together with Euroconsult Sicilia and OI Pomodoro da Industria Bacino Centro Sud Italia, hosted the eTomAato Cooking Demonstration earlier this week in Kuala Lumpur. The event is part of European Tomato – A Red passion, a campaign supported by the European Union to promote the taste, texture and flavours of tomatoes processed in Europe.



Tomatoes are at the heart of culinary traditions.

Italian fruit detective racing to save forgotten varieties

ISABELLA Dalla Ragione hunts in abandoned gardens and orchards for forgotten fruits, preserving Italy's agricultural heritage and saving varieties which could help farmers withstand the vagaries of a changing climate.

The 68-year-old's collection of apples, pears, cherries, plums, peaches and almonds, grown using methods of old, are more resilient to the climate shifts and extremes seen increasingly frequently in the southern Mediterranean.

The Italian agronomist-turned-detective seeks descriptions of bygone local fruits in centuries-old diaries or farming documents, and sets out to find them.

Others she identifies by matching them to fruits in Renaissance paintings, where they often appear in depictions of the Madonna and Child.

Of the 150 or so varieties collected from Tuscany, Umbria, Emilia-Romagna and Marche and grown by her non-profit Archeologia Arborea foundation, the small, round Florentine pear is among Dalla Ragione's favourites.

"I'd found it described in documents from the 1500s, but I'd never seen it and believed it lost," she told AFP.

"Then 15 years ago, in the mountains between Umbria and Marche, I found a tree almost in the middle of the woods" thanks to an elderly local woman who told her about it by chance.

While old varieties are flavoursome, most disappeared from markets and tables after the Second World War as Italy's agricultural system modernised.



Ragione poses in a small church where she stores fruits from the orchard collection of the Archeologia Arborea foundation in San Lorenzo. – PICS FROM AFP

Urgent

Italy is a large fruit producer. Its pear production ranks first in Europe and third globally, but just five modern varieties – none of which are Italian – account for over 80% of its output.

"There used to be hundreds, even thousands, of varieties because each region, each valley, each place had its own," Ragione said as she showed off wicker baskets full of fruit stored in a little church near the orchard.

Modern markets instead demand large crops of fruits that can be harvested quickly, easily stored and last a long time.

But as global warming makes for an increasingly challenging climate, experts say a broader range of plant genetic diversity is key.

"Heirloom varieties are able to adapt to climate change, to more severe water shortages, to extremes of cold and heat," said Mario Marino, from the climate change division of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation.

"However, with the arrival of a much more severe disease, one that improved varieties are normally more resistant to and the local varieties perish, or perhaps don't produce fruit," he told AFP.



Apple trees in the orchard collection of the Archeologia Arborea foundation.

The answer lies in creating new varieties by crossing modern and old-fashioned ones, he said.

Marino, who advises Ragione's foundation, said her work was "urgent" because "preserving one's heritage means preserving the land, preserving biodiversity... and (allowing) us to use that DNA for new genetic resources".

Oral testimonies

Researchers can access the collection, while Ragione also recreates historical gardens which can host recovered varieties as part of an EU-funded project.

"We don't do all this research and conservation work out of nostalgia, out of romanticism," she said as she harvested pink apples from her trees in the hilly hamlet of San Lorenzo di Lerchi in Umbria.

"We do it because when variety is lost, we see that food security is gone, we lose diversity and the system's ability to respond to various changes, and we also lose a lot in cultural terms."

Sampling ancient pleasures

► Young diners in Beijing take trip back in time

WOMEN wearing long wigs and ornate traditional dresses milled around a pebbled courtyard, stopping to snap photos under a pavilion, as the melodious strumming of the Chinese zither played in the background.

These customers have paid to “time travel” back to ancient China for a few hours in an experience offered by a newly opened themed restaurant in central Beijing, which provides clothing services and an eight-course meal.

While the world’s second-largest economy has been beset by sluggish domestic demand, many young people are still spending on experiences and goods that gives them satisfaction – a trend recently dubbed in China as “emotional consumption”.

Consumers born after the 1990s often buy things to “please themselves”, fuelling emotionally charged purchases in the country, the state-backed *China Daily* reported in September.

Such purchases include Labubu dolls, which have flown off the shelves in China.

“New forms of consumption... (and) new trends” such as the toothy-grinned dolls could help boost China’s economy, commerce minister Wang Wentao said in July.

Before dining, customers picked out their garments from a room lined with traditional *hanfu*, or Han clothing, headpieces adorned with faux jewels, and accessories.

Businessman Carey Zhuang said that he paid around 1,000 yuan (RM583) to dress up as one of the main characters from the famous Chinese classic novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, from which the restaurant has drawn inspiration.

Wearing a red silk top emblazoned with dragons, Zhuang said he is happy to spend money on a new experience.

“It’s not about blindly being frugal, it’s more about living in the moment,” 27-year-old Zhuang said.

Willing to spend

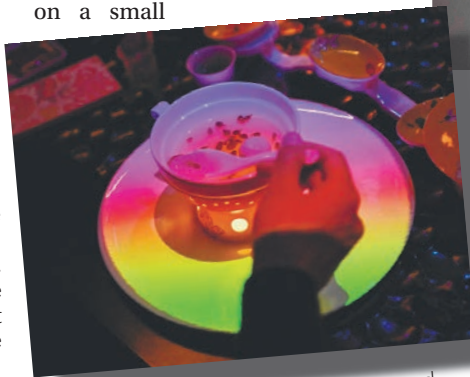
On the second floor, women sat in front of vanity desks as make-up artists powdered their faces and daintily applied blush to the apples of their cheeks.

After being made up, 22-year-old Wu Ke, dressed in a flowy, lilac *hanfu* with a matching cape, said that she was drawn to this restaurant because of her interest in ancient Chinese culture and clothing from the Song and Qing dynasties.

The broadcast host said that while people have tightened their purse strings in China, they will still be willing to spend on certain things and experiences.

“If, in our daily life, we’re a bit thrifty with things like food – for example, eating more simply – and we choose public transportation when we go out, then the money we save will definitely find somewhere to go,” Wu said.

Outside, Huang Jing smiled as she watched her nine-year-old daughter pose for photos with a parasol on a small



Chinese customers are willing to pay good money to have a taste of ancient China.

wooden bridge in the middle of a misty garden.

Huang had paid at least 900 yuan for her daughter to dress up in traditional clothing for the dinner and get her pictures professionally taken.

The restaurant was “immersive” unlike regular ones, and had a cultural element to it, Huang, a teacher, said.

Culture charm

In recent years, Chinese people – mostly women – have got increasingly interested in dressing up in *hanfu* especially while visiting key tourist sites in the country.

The hashtag *hanfu* has been viewed over 11 billion times on Instagram-like Xiaohongshu, and is filled with posts of women in elaborate costumes and hairdos.



A couple in traditional Chinese clothes visiting an open market at a Beijing restaurant.

Huang said “the charm of Chinese culture is now loved by the younger generation”.

“I hope that my daughter’s generation can continue to inherit, carry forward and spread it so that more people can know about it.”

The revival of the *hanfu* is “a concentrated manifestation” of the “emotional economy”, said Yang Jianfei from the Communication University of China.

Through immersive experiences involving the traditional clothing, young people are also engaging in a form of personal identity exploration, which connects them to “the roots of our national culture”, Yang said.

Diners were ushered into a grand, circular room, served by waiters dressed in *hanfu*, and treated to an eight-act performance involving twirling dancers and emotive dialogue from actors.

Broadcast host Wu said that as long as the reason “felt right” and “moved” her, she would be willing to fork out money.

“I won’t try to save in this regard,” she said, adding that she does not view it as “emotional spending”.

“I prefer to understand it as something that’s just about making ourselves happy.” – AFP



The newly opened restaurant offers eight-course meals.



A waiter in traditional Chinese clothes serving a meal at the restaurant.



People in traditional Chinese clothes having their meal at a theatrical restaurant in Beijing.



Interest in ancient Chinese culture and clothing from the imperial dynasties are drawing patrons to the restaurant. – ALL PICS FROM AFP



A statue of young swordsman Tanjiro, the title character in *Demon Slayer*, on display at a cinema in the Ikebukuro area of Tokyo. – AFP/IC

Triumphant *Demon Slayer*

► First Japanese movie to break ¥100 billion globally

THE latest film adaptation of the *Demon Slayer* manga franchise has become the first Japanese movie to gross more than ¥100 billion (RM2.6 billion) worldwide, its distributors said.

Demon Slayer: Kimetsu No Yaiba – Infinity Castle: Part 1, about swordswishing Tanjiro Kamado's final showdown to slay demons and make his sister human

again, is part of a planned trilogy.

Released outside Japan from August, including in North America, the caper has attracted 89.17 million viewers internationally, Aniplex and Toho said recently.

In Japan, it remains in second place by revenues behind a previous *Demon Slayer* movie, a massive hit during the Covid-19 pandemic, having already overtaken Studio Ghibli's *Spirited Away* (2001).

Originally penned by comic book artist Koyoharu Gotouge and then animated by studio Ufotable, *Demon Slayer* is often lauded for setting a new standard for anime cinematography.

Dazzling visual effects permeate the latest movie featuring acrobatic, lightning-fast battles with demons at a kaleidoscopic castle with an infinite array of floors.

The original manga also sets it apart from other Japanese juggernauts such as *One Piece*, which spans over 100 volumes compared to just 23 for *Demon Slayer*.

Anime is king in Japan but the popularity of animation has also exploded elsewhere.

Chinese animated fantasy *Ne Zha 2* is the highest-grossing film of 2025 and Netflix's most-watched movie ever is the animated *KPop Demon Hunters*. – AFP

New, old faces in *Shogun's* season two cast

HIT drama series FX's *Shogun* has announced the new and returning cast joining the series for the second season, as well as the directors and writers lined up for the next chapter of the Emmy Award-winning show, which is set over a decade after the events of the first season.

Newly added to the cast include Asami Mizukawa, Masataka Kubota, Sho Kaneta, Takaaki Enoki and Jun Kunimura.

Reprising their roles from the first season, Emmy Award winner Hiroyuki Sanada and Cosmo Jarvis are set to lead the stellar cast of returning stars, including Fumi Nikaido, Shinnosuke Abe, Hiroto Kanai, Yoriko Doguchi, Tommy Bastow, Yuko Miyamoto, Eita Okuno and Yuka Kouri.

In the first season, Lord Yoshii Toranaga (Sanada) fought for his survival as his enemies in the Council of Regents united against him. When a mysterious European ship was found marooned in a nearby village, its English pilot John Blackthorne (Jarvis) shared vital strategic secrets with Toranaga that tipped the scales of power in his favour to win a century-defining civil war.

The second season is set 10 years after the events of the first season and continues the historically-inspired saga of these two men from different worlds whose fates are inextricably entwined.



Sanada's Toranaga is at the centre of the series.

An original adaptation of James Clavell's bestselling novel, *Shogun* was created for television by executive producers Rachel Kondo and Justin Marks, alongside Michaela Clavell, Edward L McDonnell, Michael De Luca and Sanada. The series is produced by FX Productions.

The first season of *Shogun* won 18 Emmy Awards, setting the record for the most Emmy Awards by a series in a single season

and it was FX's first series to win Outstanding Drama Series. Sanada became the first Japanese actor to win the Emmy for Lead Actor in a Drama Series, and Anna Sawai made history as the first actress of Asian descent to win Lead Actress in the same category.

The second season, set to begin production in January next year, will eventually stream on Disney+.

Cambridge Dictionary names 'parasocial' word of year

DO you feel a deep bond with pop stars such as Taylor Swift or Lily Allen – even though you have never met them?

If you do, then your behaviour is "parasocial" and bang on trend, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, which recently unveiled the adjective as its word of the year for 2025.

Lexicographers picked it in a year they said was marked by interest in the one-sided parasocial relationships that people form with celebrities, influencers and artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots.

Parasocial is defined as "involving or relating to a connection that someone feels between themselves and a famous person they do not know".

The term dates back to 1956, when two University of Chicago sociologists noted television viewers developing parasocial relationships with television personalities, who they viewed in the same way as close friends or family.

As AI becomes an ever-increasing part of people's lives, "slop", which gets an updated definition, refers to low-quality AI-generated content inundating the internet.

New entrants to the Cambridge Dictionary, meanwhile, included "skibidi", "delulu" and "tradwife".

The three were among "6,212 new words, phrases and meanings" included in the online dictionary over the past 12 months, it said.

The dictionary only adds words that are thought to have "staying power", according to one of its lexicographers Colin McIntosh.

"Internet culture is changing the English language and the effect is fascinating to observe and capture in the dictionary," he said.

The slang term "skibidi" is described as having different meanings such as cool or bad.

But it can also be used with no real meaning or as a joke, or in phrases such as: "What the skibidi are you doing?"

"Delulu" is said to be a play on the word delusional.

"Tradwife" is short for traditional wife, meaning a "married woman, especially one who posts on social media, who stays at home doing cooking, cleaning".

Simone Schnall, professor of experimental social psychology at the University of Cambridge, hailed parasocial as an "inspired" choice.

"We've entered an age where many people form unhealthy and intense parasocial relationships with influencers.

"Parasocial trends take on a new dimension as many people treat AI tools such as ChatGPT as 'friends', offering positive affirmations, or as a proxy for therapy," he added. – AFP



Feeling an especially deep bond with Swift despite not knowing her could be described as 'parasocial'. – PIC FROM GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP



Lo is regarded as Asia's all-rounded pop king, having shaped Mandopop through his distinctive blend of music, dance and performance artistry.

Show Lo to bring 30th anniversary tour to Genting

TAIWANESE singer Show Lo is set to bring his 2026 Show Lo 30 Tour Concert to Arena of Stars on Jan 10, 2026, celebrating three decades of music, movement and showmanship.

This milestone concert promises an unforgettable night where fans can experience the evolution of one of Asia's most influential performers.

Carrying the theme of "30 Years on Stage, Thanks to You", the concert blends nostalgia, innovation and world-class showmanship.

Audiences will revisit Lo's most iconic eras while being transported into a dreamlike world where music, time and memory intertwine.

With upgraded staging, dynamic choreography and stunning visual design, the concert features classic "Speshow" moments alongside fresh interpretations of his biggest hits, creating a one-of-a-kind and joyful Show Time, as well as an invitation to join the wildest Show Party, a spectacle bursting with energy, creativity and heart.

Regarded as Asia's all-rounded pop king, Lo has spent three decades shaping Mandopop through his distinctive blend of music, dance and performance artistry. Over the years, he has released a string of chart-topping albums, from the iconic *Speshow* (2006) to *No Idea* (2019) and his latest *Wu Zhuang Yuan* (2024), each marking a milestone in his ever-evolving musical journey.

His world tours, including the recent "Evolution" tour and the record-breaking "Crazy World" and "Over the Limit" tours, have earned acclaim for high-energy choreography and innovative stage production.

Beyond music, Lo has starred in major box office hits such as *The Mermaid* (2016) and *Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons* (2013), cementing his status as a multitasking regional star.

Tickets are priced from RM238 to RM738, and are now available for purchase.

Songs of forbidden love

► Johan As'ari takes on singing in *Uda dan Dara*

AFTER more than a decade away from large-scale theatre, actor Johan As'ari is returning to the stage - but this time in a more challenging role, as he is required to sing live in *Teater Muzikal Uda dan Dara*.

Admitting that the challenge has made him nervous despite his 15 years in the entertainment industry, the Bukit Mertajam-born actor said he did not want to waste the opportunity.

Johan, 39, said that the classic work by the late national laureate Datuk Usman Awang served as the motivation for him to return to theatre, in addition to being a chance to sharpen his skills in other performing arts.

Because of this, Johan - whose real name is Johan Ariff As'ari and who first gained attention as Botak in the drama series *Juwana* - was willing to turn down all other job offers over the past month to fully focus on the daily rehearsals for the production.

"I miss performing in theatre. The last time I was on a large-scale theatre stage was *Bahayanya Wanita* at Panggung Sari, Istana Budaya, in 2014. I see singing as a challenge."

"I won't deny it - I've been drinking bottles of water just to calm my nerves. It has been so long since I performed in theatre, and now I have to sing too. God willing, I'll improve as I go along," he told reporters after the media preview of the musical.

Expressing his appreciation to the instructors and fellow cast members who have guided him throughout rehearsals, Johan said they have taught him not only vocals but also dance techniques, *sembah silat* and proper positioning on stage.

Meanwhile, Johan - who previously said that he would avoid physical contact scenes, especially after returning from *umrah* in 2013 - explained that such scenes in this production are merely fantasy representations and carried out respectfully as required by the script.

"It is a fantasy scene and nothing excessive - just enough to convey what needs to be conveyed," he said.



The musical is about the forbidden love between Uda, a village youth, and Dara, a noblewoman.



A scene from the media preview of *Teater Muzikal Uda dan Dara*.



Musical director Nik Nizam says all the melodies were shaped according to the characters. - PICS FROM BERNAMA

Meanwhile, *Uda dan Dara* musical director Nik Nizam Jaafar said a total of 14 new songs were specially composed by talented Istana Budaya musicians, including Syafiq Al Gampus, Ude Sitar and Izzwan, fully adapting the poetic language of the national

laureate's legendary work.

Among the songs featured are *Dara*, *Senja*, *Menanti*, *Mengemping*, *Berbalas Senda*, *Uda dan Dara*, *Ke Kota*, *Aku Kaya*, *Rampas*, *Pulang*, *Orang Alang Bakhil* and *Uda dan Dara II*, all composed within a month and based on the characters and narrative of the musical.

"All the melodies were shaped according to the characters. I need to ensure each melody fits the scene, mood and movement of the story. For instance, if a character is fierce or arrogant like Alang Bakhil, then the musical delivery must reflect that.

"The challenge is ensuring each actor can adapt to the songs, as most of them are not professional singers," said Nik Nizam, who is also a senior musician with Orkestra Tradisional Malaysia.

Running now at The Playhouse Theatre @ The Campus Ampang, the musical directed by Nik Muhammad Faiszulikhwan and Dr Marlenny Deenerwan will continue until tomorrow, featuring a cast that includes Zera Hariz (Dara), Jay Iswazir (Alang Bakhil), Farah Ahmad (Mak Dara), Amerul Affendi (Utih), Azaman Hassan (Pak Long), and Sara Sulaiman (Mak Long).

Supported by the Artistana Istana Budaya troupe, the musical is a classic retelling of the forbidden love between Uda, a village youth, and Dara, a noblewoman.

Their difference in social status and the oppression of the wealthy and greedy Alang Bakhil eventually lead to a tragic struggle that claims Uda's life, leaving Dara in grief and regret. - Bernama



Johan (right) says he sees singing as a challenge.

BINGE-WORTHY FLICKS



Are You Sure?! season two
Cast: Jimin, Jung Kook

The hit travel reality series *Are You Sure?!* returns to Disney+ for a second season, bringing BTS members Jimin and Jung Kook back to screens as they embark on a new post-military adventure. This season follows the duo on a 12-day journey filmed across Switzerland and Vietnam, capturing lighthearted challenges, scenic moments and the easy camaraderie that defined its first run. Spanning eight episodes, the new season continues the show's blend of spontaneity, humour and heartfelt reflection as the pair travel on a modest budget with only a guidebook in hand.

Seventeen: Our Chapter

Cast: S.Coups, Jeonghan, Joshua, Jun, Hoshi, Wonwoo, Woozi, DK, Mingyu, The8, Seungkwan, Vernon, Dino

The four part Disney+ music docuseries *Seventeen: Our Chapter* charts the group's first decade together, offering a candid look at their evolution from trainees to global performers. The 13-member act revisits milestone moments, creative breakthroughs and personal challenges as they prepare to celebrate their tenth anniversary. Featuring new interviews and archival footage, the series reflects on the highs and lows that shaped their journey while exploring how they plan to move forward as a group.



Prehistoric Planet: Ice Age
Cast: Tom Hiddleston

Prehistoric Planet: Ice Age expands Apple TV's award-winning natural history series with a five-part journey into the Pleistocene era, narrated by Tom Hiddleston and scored by Hans Zimmer, Anze Rozman and Kara Talve. The new season explores a world shaped by dramatic shifts between heat and cold, revealing how diverse prehistoric mammals adapted to survive in constantly changing environments. Viewers will encounter woolly mammoths, dire wolves, saber toothed cats and a wide range of lesser known species brought to life through cinematic visuals and the latest scientific discoveries. Produced by the BBC Studios Natural History Unit with executive producers Jon Favreau and Mike Gunton, the series continues the franchise's blend of science and spectacle, offering a detailed look at ancient habitats shaped by the Big Freeze and the Big Melt. The season premieres Nov 26 on Apple TV.

Surely Tomorrow

Cast: Park Seo-jun, Won Ji-an

The Korean romance series *Surely Tomorrow* brings a bittersweet love story to Prime Video as it follows Lee Kyeong-do and Seo Ji-woo through three chapters of connection, separation and an unexpected reunion. After falling in love in their early 20s, the pair part ways, only to try again years later before drifting apart once more. Now in their 30s, they meet again under difficult circumstances: Kyeong-do is a journalist investigating a major scandal, and Ji-woo is married to the man at the centre of it. Their shared history collides with present realities as they navigate lingering feelings, buried regrets and public scrutiny. Directed by Lim Hyun-ook and written by Yu Young-ah, the series balances nostalgia with emotional depth. *Surely Tomorrow* premieres Dec 6 on Prime Video with new episodes every Saturday and Sunday.



The Manipulated
Cast: Ji Changwook, Doh Kyungsoo

The Korean action drama *The Manipulated* arrives on Disney+ with a 12 episode run that follows a man determined to uncover the truth behind a crime he insists he never committed. The series centres on Taejoong, a once hopeful and hardworking young man whose life shatters after he is abruptly arrested and sentenced to prison for the rape and murder of a stranger. Years later, a new inmate with a similar story hints at a larger conspiracy that may be targeting innocent people. Fueled by loss and a need for answers, Taejoong begins to hunt those responsible. Written by Oh Sangho and directed by Park Sinwoo and Kim Changjoo, the drama blends suspense, crime and emotional intensity, with a four-episode premiere followed by weekly releases.

The Last Thing He Told Me season two

Cast: Jennifer Garner, Angourie Rice, David Morse, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, Judy Greer

Apple TV's hit drama *The Last Thing He Told Me* returns for a second season on Feb 20, 2026, continuing the story of Hannah Hall as she faces the fallout of her husband's disappearance. Based on Laura Dave's upcoming novel *The First Time I Saw Him*, the new season follows Hannah and her stepdaughter Bailey when Owen reappears after five years on the run, forcing them into a race to uncover the truth and protect what remains of their family. The eight-episode season brings back the core cast and introduces new characters as the mystery deepens. Executive produced by Josh Singer, Aaron Zelman, Reese Witherspoon and Lauren Neustadter, the series expands the emotional and suspenseful world established in the bestselling novel and its first adaptation.



Podcast with Vikadakavi

Cast: Vikadakavi Magen, Dr Bhani, Bala Ganapathi William, Tasha, Sagunthala Ganeshan, Arul Selvan, Linges, Malini Rama, Viki (Raaga), Dr Mani, Sasitharan K Rajoo, Dr Maha

Podcast with Vikadakavi is a new conversational series on Astro Vinmeen that brings together Gen Z perspectives and real-life stories across community issues, work culture, relationships and personal growth. Hosted by Vikadakavi Magen and directed by Rani Sundarajoo, the 11-episode series features a diverse line-up of guests who share insights drawn from their own experiences, covering topics that range from social challenges and cultural myths to business ideas and medical discussions. Designed to spark meaningful conversation, the series aims to reflect the concerns and aspirations of today's young adults. New episodes premiere every Thursday at 9.30pm on Astro Vinmeen, with streaming available on Astro Go, On Demand and Sooka.





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Stokes leads from the front

England skipper takes 5 after Starc's seven as 19 wickets fall in Ashes opening day

AUSTRALIA trailed England by 49 runs on 123-9 at the end of an extraordinary opening day of the Ashes series yesterday at Perth Stadium, where bowlers had very much the upper hand and a remarkable 19 wickets fell.

Mitchell Starc, spearheading the home attack in the absence of the injured Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, took a career-best 7-58 as Australia dismissed the tourists for 172 before tea.

The large visiting contingent in the crowd of 51,531 were soon in full voice, however, as England skipper Ben Stokes led a pace counter-offensive to rip through the Australian batting order and claim his own five-wicket haul with figures of 5-23.

Nathan Lyon, who was three not out, and debutant quick Brendan Doggett, who had yet to score, will resume on day two looking to cut a few more runs off the deficit.

"What a day. I think everyone that's come today has got their time worth - 19 wickets," England seamer Brydon Carse said in a pitch-side interview. "Fantastic last session from everyone to put us in a strong position heading into tomorrow."

The action-packed opening day, which saw more wickets fall on any single day of an Ashes Test since 1909, evoked memories of the first day of last year's Test between Australia and India at the same stadium when 17 first-day wickets fell.

After opting to bat first, England were stunned in the opening over when Zak Crawley was tempted into a drive by an angled Starc delivery, which edged to first slip, and departed for a duck. Starc followed up by trapping B.Duckett leg-before with a full inswinger for 21.

His 100th Ashes wicket came when he had Joe Root, looking nowhere near scoring his first Test hundred Down Under, out for nought to a ball that found Marnus Labuschagne at third slip. Ollie Pope scored 46 before giving all-rounder C. Green his only wicket while Starc got his fourth when Stokes was clean-bowled on six.

Doggett picked up his maiden Test wicket when top-scorer Harry Brook was caught-behind for an aggressive 52, before Starc returned to celebrate his fifth Ashes five-wicket haul and 17th overall when Gus Atkinson was caught in the slips.

Starc rounded out his first seven-wicket haul by removing Jamie Smith for 33 and sending Mark Wood back for a duck as England's dogged adherence to the aggressive 'Bazball' approach saw the last four wickets add only 12 runs.

Late in the second session, debutant Jake Weatherald opened for Australia but his stint was short-lived as he was given out lbw for a second-ball duck to Jofra Archer, who took 2-11 in nine overs. Consistently bowling at speeds of nearly 150kph, Archer and Wood set the tone for the tourists, ably supported by Stokes and Carse, who pitched in with 2-45. - Reuters

Shubman doubtful for second Test

INDIA CAPTAIN Shubman Gill (*pic*) could miss the second Test against S. Africa if there is any concern about a recurring neck spasm, batting coach Sitanshu Kotak said yesterday.

Shubman, who retired hurt in the first innings of the Kolkata Test which India lost by 30 runs, travelled with the team to Guwahati on Wednesday.

"He is definitely recovering really well. Now, the decision (whether to play him or not) will be taken tomorrow evening," Kotak told reporters.

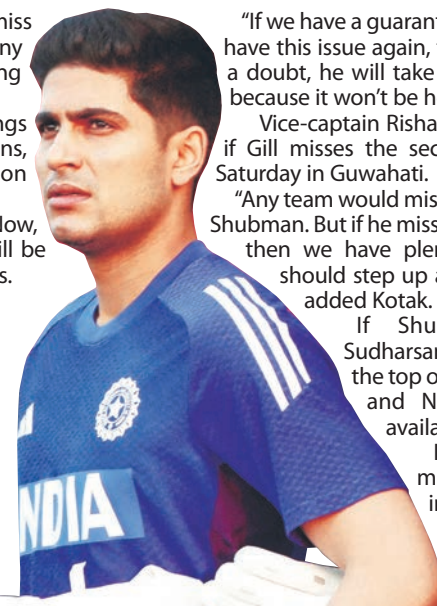
"If we have a guarantee that very likely he won't have this issue again, then he will play. If there is a doubt, he will take rest (for) one more game, because it won't be helpful to the team."

Vice-captain Rishabh Pant will lead the hosts if Gill misses the second test which starts on Saturday in Guwahati.

"Any team would miss a player and a captain like Shubman. But if he misses out because of an injury, then we have plenty of good players who should step up and perform for the team," added Kotak.

If Shubman is absent, Sai Sudharsan could reclaim his spot in the top order, with Devdutt Padikkal and Nitish Kumar Reddy also available as alternatives.

India and South Africa will meet in three one-day internationals and five T20 internationals between Nov 30 and Dec 19. - Reuters



322 Notices

FOCAL PARK SDN BHD (358698-H)
NOTIS LELONG AWAM KENDERAAN UNTUK DILELONG
SEPERTI SEDIA ADA

TEMPAT & TARIKH LELONG : Northern Region (Alor Setar, Butterworth & Ipoh)
 27-11-2025 (Khamis) Pukul 11:00pagi

TARIKH MELIHAT : SEBELUM TIGA HARI LELONG
 (Pukul 9:00pagi - 4:00petang)

PERTANYAAN (Tel): Butterworth 04-3567972, Alor Setar 04-787 7972,
 Ipoh 05-5293971

FPAC - PELELONG BERLESEN : a) Mr. Chew Wool Kok,
 b) Mr. Steven Lim Peng Seng (02097),
 c) Pn Hasniza Binti Abu Samah (01038)

Alamat : 352, Permatang Tok Jaya Maklom Sg Dua 13800 Butterworth.
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Item	Reg No	Jenis & Model	Tahun
AM1	DEM892	MERCEDES BENZ C43 AMG	2017
AM2	NBOS8778 (QDC8395)	MERCEDES BENZ E350E	2017
AM3	WWK7219	NISSAN X-TRAIL LUXURY (A) 2.0i	2004
AM4	WSH1488	PERODUA MYVI 1.3	2009
AM5	WC6428L	PROTON PERSONA 1.6	2015
AM6	AKE9443	PROTON PREVE 1.6	2015
AM7	CEF2647	PROTON SAGA 1.3 (M)	2020
AM8	AKH8995	PROTON SAGA 1.3 CVT	2016
AM9	AEL3591	PROTON WIRA 1.3GL	2001
AM10	VAG7863	VOLKSWAGEN PASSAT 1.8 CKD	2017
AM11	AJV472	PERODUA MYVI 1.3	2014
AM12	AJC4108	PERODUA ALZA 1.5	2012
AM13	JTK5428	PROTON IRIZ 1.6	2019
AM14	QS2941N	PROTON SAGA 1.3	2021
AM15	AGV172	SUZUKI - S CROSS CVT	2014
AM16	WNB3001	TOYOTA VIOS 1.5	2005
AM17	BHF83	TOYOTA WISH 1.8	2004
AM18	VAN7243	TOYOTA VIOS 1.5	2017

(Perhatian: Kenderaan-kenderaan diatas yang tidak dibida dalam perlelongan akan dilelong semula pada 04-12-2025)

Lee grabs Tour C'ship lead

SOUTH KOREA'S Lee So-mi fired an 8-under 64 to seize a two-stroke lead over American Allisen Corpuz after yesterday's opening round of the LPGA Tour Championship.

Lee birdied seven of the first 15 holes and eagled the par-five 17th before a closing bogey at Tiburon Golf Club in Naples, Florida.

"My tee shot and putter were the things I was focusing on and I really practiced them a lot. I think that was the foundation to my success today," Lee said through a translator.

The US\$11 million (RM47m) event features 60 players who qualified during the season chasing the LPGA's biggest prize of US\$4 million (RM17m). Top-ranked defending

champion Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand shared third on 67 with Japan's Nasa Hataoka and South Koreans Kim Sei-young and Im Jin-hee.

World No. 50 Lee, a 26-year-old from Wando, won her first LPGA title in June at the Dow Championship pairs event alongside Im and shook off the nerves of her first Tour Championship.

"It's an honor playing my first Tour Championship and I don't think I was necessarily in a position to be nervous about anything," Lee said.

"I thought to myself, whatever the score is or how I play, let's just prepare for next year's season. I think that kind of alleviated the stress in today's round to be able to get a better score." - AFP

Hamilton hits back at 'talk less' jibe from Ferrari boss

BY PHILIP DUNCAN

LEWIS HAMILTON has told Ferrari chairman John Elkann that he is motivated to deliver success for the Italian team after he was urged to "talk less and focus more on his driving".

Elkann took aim at Hamilton and teammate Charles Leclerc after both drivers failed to finish at the last round in Brazil.

Hamilton, who has failed to land a podium in his 21 outings for Ferrari so far, described his first season after the race in Interlagos as a "nightmare".

But when asked if it is fair to demand he focus more on driving ahead of this weekend's Las Vegas Grand Prix, Hamilton replied: "Not really because I wake up thinking about it.

"I go to sleep thinking about it.

"And I think about it while I am sleeping. If

anything, I have to focus on being able to unplug more.

"John and I, we speak almost every week. We have a great relationship. I didn't have a reaction to it (Elkann's comments). I don't look into those things."

Outside of his sprint victory at the second round in China, Hamilton's switch from Mercedes to Ferrari has failed to live up to its blockbuster billing.

He is 66 points behind Leclerc while Ferrari have slipped to fourth in the constructors' championship. The Italian team have failed to win a title of any sort in 17 years.

Hamilton, 40, continued: "It has been a really heavy year and the busiest year I have had. We are all climbing up a mountain, and then you arrive at the weekend and slip 10 steps back, you have to get back up and try again.

"I joined this team knowing full well that it takes time to steer a ship in a different direction and this is a huge organisation with so many moving parts and we cannot fix it in a click of a finger. It takes time.

"Of course, it has not been what any of us have wanted with the troubles and results we have had, but we continue to push on, full steam.

"Our goal is to get to the front and we are not at the front and I take it all incredibly personally.

"But I have reminded myself how resilient I am. I back this team 100%, and I back myself 100%, and I know that when we get things right it is going to be amazing.

"I cannot wait for that moment and I truly believe that will happen and I am not losing sight of that even with all the difficult days we have had." – The Independent

Piastri set to enjoy Vegas GP

OSCAR PIASTRI said there had been some "tough moments" as his commanding Formula One lead evaporated, but he was "looking forward to getting back in the car in Vegas" this weekend.

The Australian started the season in style with four wins in the first nine races. After his fifth victory in round 15 in the Netherlands, Piastri led McLaren teammate Lando Norris by 34 points.

Yet, going into round 22 in Nevada this weekend, Piastri trails Norris by 24 points.

"I was particularly strong in the first half of the season. Even though things aren't going as well now, I don't think I should have done anything differently recently," he said.

"There's going to be bumps along the road."

There are a maximum of 83 points available in the last three races and the sprint on the final weekend in Qatar.

Asked if he needed to win them all, Piastri replied: "That would help!"

"It's going to be difficult now to try and win.

"But the mentality of trying to go out each week and get the most out of it is still there," he added.

His problems have started in qualifying, leaving him pressing to catch up when the flag drops.

In the first 15 races of the season, Piastri secured five pole positions and was second on the grid five times. In the last six, he has not started from the front row.

In round 16 in Monza, Piastri was edged on to the second row by reigning champion Max Verstappen and by Norris.

In the race, Piastri climbed to second because the McLaren pit crew botched a Norris tyre change.

The team asked Piastri to give the place back, which he did. The difference between second and third meant a six-point swing to Norris.

The following race in Baku was a disaster as Piastri made, what he called, "silly mistakes". He crashed in qualifying, started ninth on the grid, virtually stalled at the start, dropped to last and then crashed into a wall.

That ended a run of 34 consecutive races in the points.

In Austin and Mexico, Piastri said, "something fundamental wasn't working."

"The other races have been a combination of different things going wrong," he said. "What some might say is 'the difficult world of motor sport'."

"There have been some tough lessons to learn, some tough moments to have to accept, and nothing more than that.

"I'm looking forward to getting back in the car in Vegas. I'm concentrating on performance, building a strong weekend and maximising every opportunity," he said. – AFP



McLaren's Lando Norris during practice at the Las Vegas Grand Prix. – REUTERS/PIC

Full throttle

Norris reveals strategy with clear advantage in F1 title race

BY PHILIP DUNCAN

LANDO NORRIS said he wants to win the world championship in style – despite admitting his advantage at the top of the standings puts him in "control" of the title race.

Norris is 24 points clear of McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri and 49 ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen with 83 points left as the F1 season reaches its climax.

The British driver can now afford to finish second to Piastri at all of the concluding three races of the year – starting at this weekend's Las Vegas Grand Prix – and still undoubtedly

seal his maiden crown.

But Norris said: "What has served me so well recently is by going flat-out, staying out of trouble and the chaos behind. It's almost a safer bet. So protecting my championship lead is not the right mindset to have.

"I come here to win. I'll go to the next race in Qatar to win. I will still treat it as if I'm not in a championship and that's the mentality I'll have.

"Of course, I feel a little bit more in control, but nothing changes because of whatever points I've got."

Norris was 34 points behind Piastri when his engine expired at the Dutch Grand Prix in Zandvoort on

the final day of August.

But he has arrived for this weekend's night race on the Strip as the grid's in-form driver with successive victories from pole position in Mexico and Brazil.

Quizzed as to the turning point behind his campaign, Norris, who turned 26 last week, said: "It is hard not to do a better job than I was doing at the beginning of the season.

"I have a very strong group of people around me to support me, to direct me and help me whether I have had a good weekend or a bad weekend.

"I'm also more positive and less negative about when I have bad days

and bad sessions. And I believe in myself that I can turn it around. I've done that a good amount of times now, and that's a very reassuring feeling that I need."

Verstappen is bidding to emulate Michael Schumacher by winning five consecutive titles, but, while he mathematically remains in the contest, he is the equivalent of two wins behind Norris.

"I am a long way behind, and there is not a lot I can do," said Verstappen.

"We need a lot of luck until the end, so personally I am not thinking about it too much." – The Independent

PITLANE

Stroll takes swipale at Colapinto

ASTON MARTIN'S Lance Stroll has hit back at criticism from Alpine Formula One driver Franco Colapinto by suggesting the young Argentine focus on scoring his first point of the season. Colapinto, 22, accused the Canadian – son of team owner Lawrence – in Brazil of "always taking people out" and not looking in his car's mirrors after an incident with Sauber's Gabriel Bortoletto. "I heard about it. I don't know. Maybe he's frustrated and angry with life," Stroll told reporters ahead of the Las Vegas Grand Prix. "I don't know how many

points he has in the championship. I can't tell you. Zero? He has zero points... he should probably focus on his own things and try to score some points this year." Colapinto, who has a huge following as the only Argentine in F1, is the sole driver yet to open his scoring account for 2025.

Max eyes Ricciardo's old number

MAX VERSTAPPEN has his eye on former teammate Daniel Ricciardo's old race car number if he has to relinquish the champion's one next season. Red Bull's four times world champion raced with the 33 before he took his first title in 2021, with plenty of numbered merchandise sold, but he told

Dutch reporters in Las Vegas that he really wanted the Australian's #3. A change in the rules, yet to be approved, means drivers will no longer have to stick with the same number through their careers but Ricciardo's remains technically unavailable despite him announcing his retirement. The rules say a driver must not have raced for two consecutive seasons before the number can be reassigned. Ricciardo raced in Singapore in September last year. The number one is reserved for the champion, if he wants to use it, and must be given up when the reign ends. "I will look at it over the winter, but my favourite number is #3. We just need to see whether that is actually possible," Verstappen said.

Home sweet home

Barca hoping Nou Camp return can spark La Liga title defence

FINALLY reopening Nou Camp is cause to celebrate for Barcelona but coach Hansi Flick will only be happy if they inaugurate their rebuilt stadium by kick-starting their La Liga title defence today (11.15pm Malaysian time).

The Catalan giants host Athletic Bilbao while trailing Real Madrid by three points after an inconsistent start to the campaign, below the level they were as they claimed a domestic treble last season.

With three international breaks disrupting the opening months, now Flick has the chance to knuckle down and find solutions to Barca's problems.

They have shipped 15 goals, more than nine of the 10 teams beneath them, while the attack has also struggled to ignite in the way it did in Flick's debut year.

Returning to their home is one of several

reasons for Barca to believe the coming weeks will be positive.

They last played at Nou Camp in May 2023, with the stadium shut for two-and-a-half years.

Barca had hoped to reopen it in November 2024 but construction problems and other setbacks led to its delay, with the team playing in exile at the Olympic stadium.

"(Playing there) will definitely help us... for the club's future, it's very important, I congratulate everyone who has worked on it," said Flick.

In Barcelona's prior outing they beat Celta Vigo 4-2 in Galicia, with a wild first half giving way to a far more controlled second, which might indicate the direction his team need to take.

"The second half gives us confidence for the next matches and this is what we need," said the coach.

Flick hopes that confidence is what the team needs to be able to execute their high-line defence to perfection, as they did for a long period last term.

"I always think to say something about the experts, former players, former coaches, but I will not do it, (it makes) too much noise for us," said Flick, showing he has heard the criticism regularly aimed at him over Barca's defensive woes.

The club have failed to keep a clean sheet in any of the nine games they have played across all competitions since goalkeeper Joan Garcia was injured.

The stopper is poised to return against Athletic to help end that run.

Striker Robert Lewandowski netted a hat-trick against Celta and following a troubled start to the campaign because of injury his presence is a big boost.

The veteran has a nose for goal which his stand-in Ferran Torres cannot replicate, as well as offering good build-up connections for Barca's wingers.

Teen starlet Lamine Yamal is a doubt after he missed Spain's World Cup qualifiers following treatment on a long-running groin issue, while Raphinha is close to a return on the other flank.

Although Marcus Rashford has impressed during his loan from Manchester United, the Brazilian's intensity and work-rate has been missed in recent weeks.

One problem for Flick against Athletic is Frenkie de Jong's suspension while Pedri is out injured, denying the coach his first-choice pair of central midfielders. Marc Casado and Dani Olmo are likely to step in.

Whoever Flick selects will become part of the stadium's new history, 68 years after the previous iteration was opened in 1957. - AFP

Milan derby in spotlight

AS Italian fans exhale and brace for playoff drama after the latest chapter of World Cup qualifying torment, their attention swings back to Serie A where the Milan derby takes centre stage and could prove pivotal early in the title race.

Leaders Inter meet third-placed AC Milan on Monday (3.45am) with the two eternal rivals separated by two points in a high-stakes match that could carry the weight of something larger than just an early-season checkpoint.

With no more international breaks until March, managers will be happy to keep their squads together in the coming months, none more so than two new coaches in Inter's Cristian Chivu and Milan's Massimiliano Allegri.

After hiccups early in the season, Inter have hit their stride to win their last three league games, including a 2-0 victory over Lazio top of the standings. They are not getting carried away, however, "Being top right now doesn't count for anything. There is a long way to go," wing back Federico Dimarco said.

Neighbours Milan are showing signs of being a team who could be serious Serie A contenders without European commitments cluttering their calendar as Allegri's side boast an 11-match unbeaten run across all competitions.

Three draws in their last four Serie A games, however, cost them the chance to claim an outright lead in the *Scudetto* and squandering a two-goal lead against a struggling Parma side last time out, a 2-2 draw, revealed frailties. Champions Napoli are fourth, two points behind Inter, but weighed down by injuries to key players and a manager in open revolt against his own team's spirit.

A fuming Antonio Conte did not mince words after their 2-0 defeat by Bologna prevented Napoli from going top, saying they lacked "heart, desire and hunger".

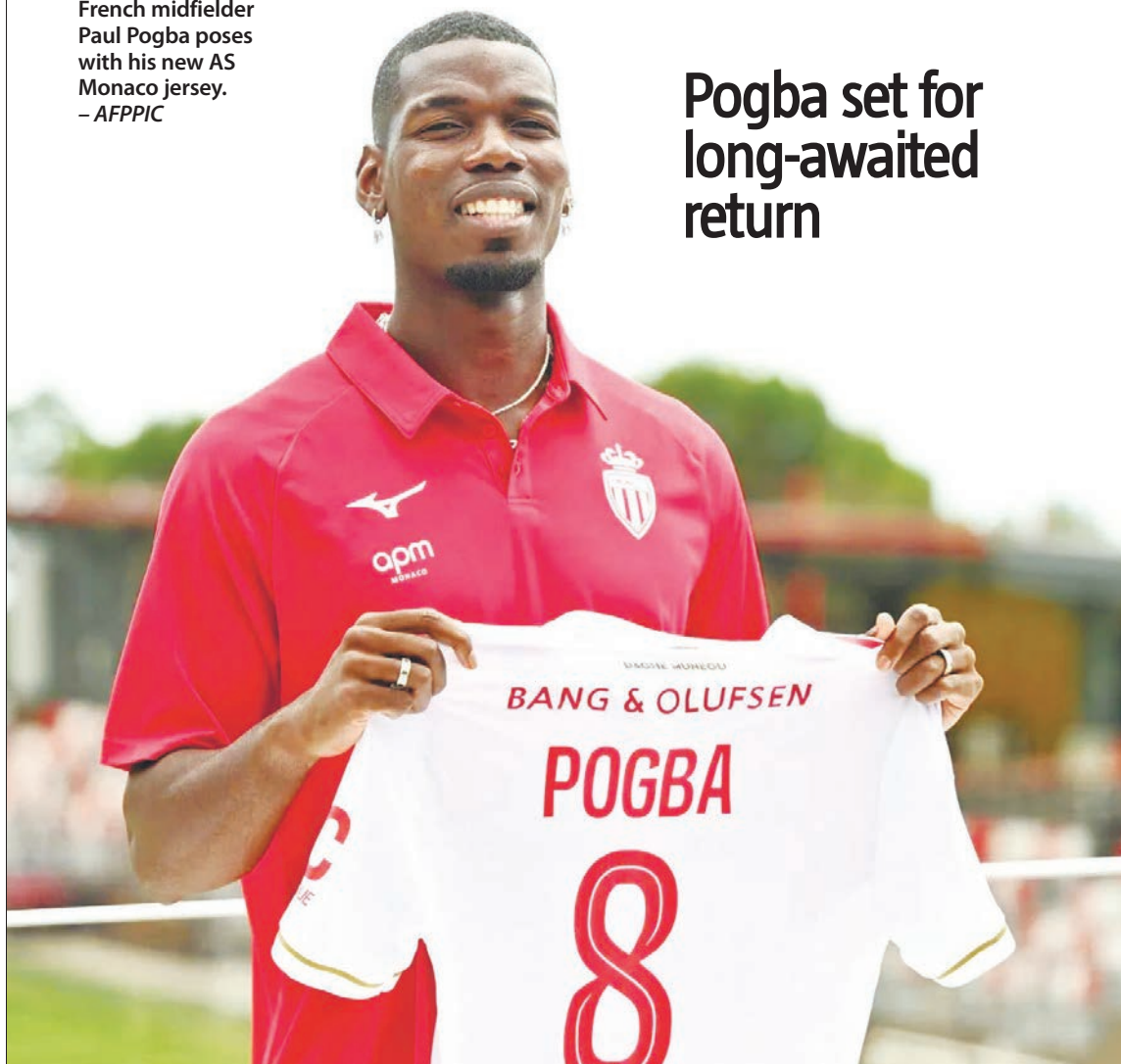
It was their third league defeat of the season and fifth in all competitions.

"Everyone has to take responsibility. I'm the first to be held accountable. Heart transplants aren't an option. Each of us needs to rediscover our spirit and our grit," Conte said.

Napoli take on Atalanta who named former Fiorentina boss Raffaele Palladino as manager after sacking Ivan Juric with the club languishing in 13th.

Roma are away at Cremonese while sixth-placed Juventus travel to face rock-bottom Fiorentina who are still seeking their first win of the season. - AFP

French midfielder Paul Pogba poses with his new AS Monaco jersey. - AFP/IC



Pogba set for long-awaited return

PAUL POGBA is expected to make his long-awaited return to action after over two years out of the game when Monaco travel to Rennes tomorrow (2am) in Ligue 1.

The 2018 World Cup winner has made only 12 appearances across the last three seasons due to injuries, a doping suspension and an extortion case in which he was the victim.

Pogba failed a drugs test in August 2023 after a match for Juventus and was handed a four-year ban, which was subsequently reduced to 18 months.

Nonetheless, the Italian giants terminated his contract last November, bringing to an early end an unhappy second stint in Turin blighted by injuries and other problems.

But the chance to salvage his career came to the 32-year-old in the form of Ligue 1 side Monaco, who decided to take a gamble on him once he became available again following the conclusion of his suspension in March.

Unlikely to start at Roazhon Park against Rennes as Ligue 1 starts back up after the international break, Pogba may only be sent on for

the final moments of the match by Sebastien Pocognoli as sixth-placed Monaco continue to bed him in gently.

Regardless, all eyes will be on Pogba to see if his innate ability to spot and execute the pass few else could even imagine, much less pull off, has not disappeared with time.

Pogba has stated he dreams of returning to the France set-up ahead of the 2026 World Cup but only time will tell if his body can find it within itself to stand up to the demands of modern football over the rest of the season.

"It's the wish of every French football player to represent the France national team, but there are stages," Pogba said upon signing for Monaco.

"Today I'm at stage one: coming back and performing well.

"There are spots to be won and you have to earn them."

Elsewhere in Ligue 1 action this weekend, leaders Paris Saint-Germain take on Le Havre, third-placed Lens welcome fourth-placed Strasbourg and bitter south coast rivals Nice and Marseille meet. - AFP

Dortmund host Stuttgart with title hopes slipping away

BORUSSIA DORTMUND host German Cup holders Stuttgart today (10.30pm) in the Bundesliga with yet another shot at a title slowly slipping away from the grasp of Niko Kovac's side. Appointed Dortmund coach with the club flailing last January, Kovac steadied the ship, pushing his side to claim 22 of a possible 24 points to sneak into Champions League qualification.

The performance led to whispers Dortmund may be able to mount a title challenge this campaign, 14 years since the last time they lifted the shield.

But this year, Dortmund already sit seven points behind Bayern Munich with just 10 games played.

Kovac's side are once again dropping points far too easily, against good sides and bad.

Dortmund sit third, level on points with Stuttgart but ahead on goal difference.

Stuttgart were in the second division as recently as 2019-20, but they have had the better of Dortmund in recent seasons.

Under Sebastian Hoeness, named Stuttgart coach in April 2023, Stuttgart are unbeaten against Dortmund, winning five and drawing once.

Dortmund poached Stuttgart's star striker Serhou Guirassy and captain Waldemar Anton in 2024, but the negative record continues.

Hoeness told reporters on Thursday: "I like playing against Dortmund, you're playing against a top team. It's fun - but I didn't actually know the record was so good.

"Playing in Dortmund is one of the most challenging matches you can get in the Bundesliga."

Elsewhere, Bayern Munich will hope to rebound from dropping points for the first time in any competition at Union Berlin last matchday when they host Freiburg today (10.30pm).

Also today, 2024 title winners Bayer Leverkusen travel to floundering Wolfsburg, while second-placed RB Leipzig play at home against Werder Bremen tomorrow. - AFP



O'Neill out to upset Azzurri

BY ELEANOR CROOKS

MICHAEL O'NEILL admitted Northern Ireland wanted to avoid Italy in the World Cup qualifying playoffs but backed his side to cause a major upset.

Northern Ireland must travel to Italy on March 26 for the one-off fixture, with the winners facing another away match against either Wales or Bosnia and Herzegovina five days later for a place at the finals in North America.

Northern Ireland boss O'Neill said: "We knew we'd always have a tough fixture away from home regardless of who it would be.

"I suppose we'd have preferred one of the other teams that were in pot one but ultimately to get to the World Cup we're going to have to beat two very good teams.

"Italy away will be a massive game, great game for us to be involved in. Obviously the expectation and the pressure is very much on the Italians and we have to try to use that in our favour and we have to believe.

"I think the performances we've given in this campaign and away from home.

"I think they've been strong and hopefully that will give us confidence that we believe we can go to Italy and win the game.

"The big thing for me is that come March we're as strong as possible in terms of the players' availability, that will be a big factor for us. And, if we are, I believe we can get the right result."

The stakes are high for the *Azzurri*, who have failed to qualify for the last two World Cups.

O'Neill admitted he has not studied Italy closely having been focused on Northern Ireland's group, but he added: "I know they lost home and away to Norway in the qualification.

"With (Gennaro) Gattuso as the manager, you'd expect them to be not lacking in passion.

"We'll do our work now, we've got four months to prepare for this game and look at Italy in close detail.

"What I will say to (my players) is don't waste the opportunity. It's not a case of being ready, it's about taking the opportunity.

"The most important thing is that we have belief going into this game that we can produce probably one of the best results that we'll have in our history, certainly in our recent history." – The Independent

Amorim admits to early struggles at United

BY RICHARD JOLLY

RUBEN AMORIM has said it was the best decision of his career to join Manchester United but admitted he was "overwhelmed" and too emotional at times in his first year at Old Trafford.

The Portuguese faces Everton on Tuesday (4am Malaysian time) on the first anniversary of his match in charge, a 1-1 draw at Ipswich, with United on their longest unbeaten run of his tenure, a five-match sequence that has featured three wins.

Amorim described it as a "good year" even though United only came 15th last season, their lowest season for half a century, failed to qualify for

Europe and then suffered an embarrassing Carabao Cup defeat to League Two Grimsby.

The former Sporting CP manager said he had endured some hard days and nights and revealed he was shocked by the performances at Grimsby and Brentford this season but believes United are improving.

"It was a good year," he told MUTV. "I learn a lot. I change how I see things. I learn for the future and the present.

"Some days were really hard, some nights were really hard but then I had some moments I really enjoyed.

"This is a massive club and I would not change for any club. When you belong to this club, you

belong to something really special. "We are here to stay, I hope. I think it was the best decision in my career (to come)."

Amorim joined United when they had a busy fixture list, with 42 matches from his November arrival to the end of the season, which made it harder for him.

"It was everything at the same time," he explained. "I felt last year, I was always overwhelmed with the games.

"I didn't have the time to settle down, to understand that my job is not just the pitch, it's outside the pitch, (it) is to push for everyone.

"I felt like, last year, I was really emotional all the time, because I was struggling with the results.

"I'm always saying that this is going to take time, but I'm the guy that has the bigger responsibility to take care of everything and to control the emotions a little bit better."

Now United seem on an upward curve but, while they are seventh in the Premier League, Amorim believes they ought to be higher.

"I think we are improving," he said. "We are doing good things but we have so much to do. We are so far from perfection because we should have more points in this moment.

"Grimsby was the most difficult moment for me and also a bit Brentford. In these moments, I was a bit shocked. I was not expecting that." – The Independent

Perilous journey

Italy to face Northern Ireland in 2026 World Cup playoffs

FOUR-TIME World Cup winners Italy will face Northern Ireland in the semifinals of the European playoffs for the 2026 tournament while Ukraine face star-studded Sweden.

Italy will take on Northern Ireland on March 26 next year at an Italian venue that is yet to be confirmed, after to the draw made in Zurich on yesterday.

Five days later the winner will travel to face the winner of Wales's semifinal against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Despite another error-strewn qualification campaign, Italy still have a chance of reaching the World Cup finals for the first time since the 2014 tournament in Brazil, having failed to qualify in 2018 and 2022.

Facing the *Azzurri* will be a daunting challenge for Northern Ireland, who have only beaten the Italians once in 11 meetings, and that was in 1958.

Italy coach Gennaro Gattuso said: "Let's concentrate on the first match. Northern Ireland are a team that we can beat.

"They're a team that have their own style, they're very physical... they'll give us a good game but we can do it. We know about Wales and Bosnia, and playing in Cardiff is difficult for anybody, but for now let's concentrate on the semifinal."

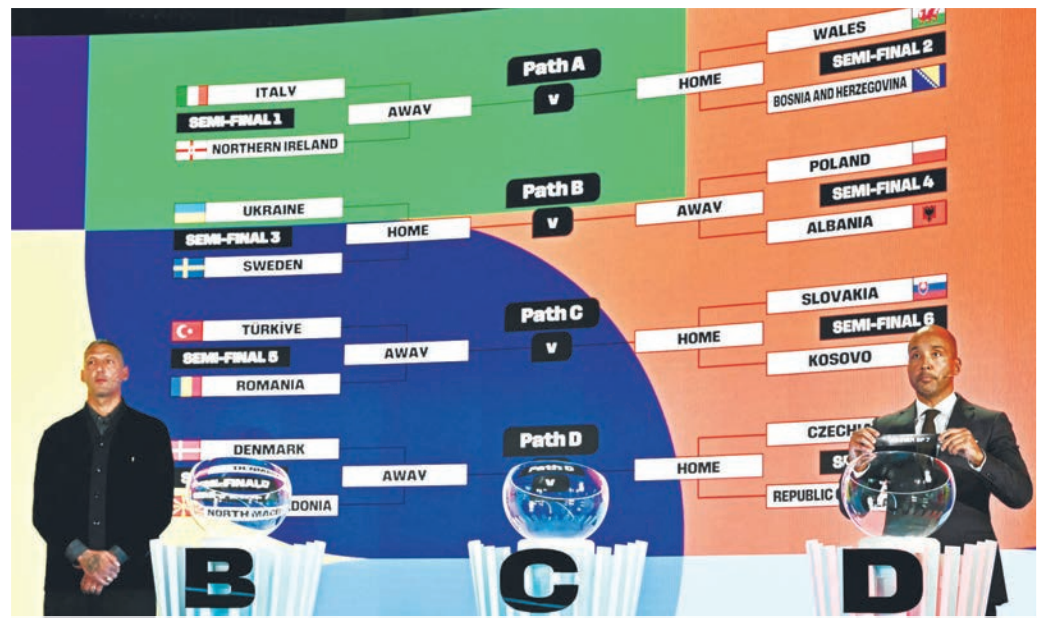
War-torn Ukraine will play a Sweden team that could feature Liverpool's £125 million (RM725m) forward Alexander Isak and Arsenal striker Viktor Gyokeres.

The Swedes, though, were woeful in qualifying, finishing bottom of their group, and only got into the playoffs thanks to their performance in the Nations League.

Newly appointed English coach Graham Potter, formerly in charge of Brighton and Chelsea, faces a tough task to steer the Swedes to the finals in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Potter said Sweden had a "fantastic opportunity".

"We need to absolutely make sure we're in a



The European PlayOff draw for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. – AFP/IC

good place in March. "We need to use our time until then wisely," he said.

Whoever triumphs in the Ukraine vs Sweden match will face the winner of Poland's meeting with Albania – the Albanians are bidding to reach football's showpiece for the first time.

Meanwhile, the Republic of Ireland, who reached the playoffs after a dramatic late goal from Troy Parrott earned a 3-2 win in Hungary on Monday, face a tough trip to the Czech Republic.

The winner of that match will host the winner of the semifinal between Denmark and North Macedonia.

Turkey will play Romania, who were surprise quarterfinalists the last time the tournament was played in the United States in 1994.

The winner will face either Slovakia or Kosovo,

who are also trying to reach a World Cup for the first time in their history.

All the European semifinals will take place on March 26, with the finals on March 31.

In the inter-continental playoffs, New Caledonia – another nation bidding to make a first appearance at a World Cup finals – will play against Jamaica for the right to face the seeded Democratic Republic of Congo.

Bolivia will play Suriname – yet another country seeking a first ever appearance – with the victor going on to a winner-takes-all game against Iraq.

Those games will be played in March next year.

The expansion of the 2026 World Cup to 48 teams from 32 teams in 2022 has led to a clutch of first-time qualifiers, including Curacao and Uzbekistan. – AFP

Liverpool were prepared to let Salah, Van Dijk leave for free, says chairman Werner

LIVERPOOL would have walked away from contract talks with Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk and let them leave on free transfers if they had asked for too much money, chairman Tom Werner revealed.

Salah, the third highest scorer in Liverpool's history, and captain Van Dijk both signed new two-year deals in April, less than three months before the end of their previous contracts and after sagas that lasted for much of the season in which the Egyptian had

claimed he was "more out than in" and when the club risked losing both.

But while it took months to come to an agreement with both the defender and the forward, Werner praised director of football Richard Hughes for the patient way he handled talks.

Werner told James Pearce in his new book *Walk On*: "Richard is a friend of mine.

"And what I like about him as a friend translates into why he's a great

leader. I can't say enough wonderful things about Richard.

"I'd call him frequently and say, 'Richard, how are things going with Mo Salah and his contract?', and he would say, 'Tom, it will all be good in the end'. He conducts business in a very respectful way. He has a plan and he executes it.

"We were delighted that the new contracts for Mo and Virgil were sorted. But you know what? If Richard had called and said, 'The chasm is too

big, I would have respected that too.

"John (W Henry), Mike (Gordon) and I try to find people who are excellent at their jobs and let them do their jobs.

"We don't meddle, we just provide support and advice from our point of view.

"There's a lot of trust. I can't say enough wonderful things about Richard."

The American businessman said head coach Arne Slot was "always"

Liverpool's first choice to replace Jurgen Klopp and said it was a "surprise" how well the Dutchman's first season went, as he won the Premier League title.

He praised Slot, saying: "One of Arne's great attributes is his authenticity.

"He's not trying to be Jurgen Klopp, he's not trying to be Pep Guardiola. He's his own man, and he's quite brilliant in all the things that he does." – The Independent

SHORTS

Two Harimau Malaya players get SEA Games call-up

TWO Harimau Malaya players, Muhammad Ubaidullah Shamsul Fazili and Muhammad Alif Izwan Yuslan, are among the 25 players listed for the national U-23 squad's centralised training camp ahead of the 2025 SEA Games in Thailand next month.

They were part of Malaysia's squad for the 2027 Asian Cup Qualifiers match against Nepal last Tuesday. In a statement yesterday, the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) said the training camp for the squad coached by Mohd Nafuzi Zain will begin on Nov 25.

"Nafuzi and the U-23 national coaching staff will retain 23 players for the SEA Games in Songkhla, Thailand, from Dec 7-18, and will hold two closed-door friendly matches before departing for Thailand," the statement said. Malaysia have been drawn in Group B alongside Vietnam and Laos. The winners of each group and the best runner-up will qualify for the semifinals.

The 2025 SEA Games will officially take place from Dec 9-20 across three provinces: Bangkok, Chonburi and Songkhla.

Third place for Tengku Amir

THE Raja Muda of Selangor, Tengku Amir Shah Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, delivered an impressive performance in the third race of the 35th Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta (RMSIR) from Penang to Langkawi, finishing in third place.

Tengku Amir, along with the crew of the yacht *Maduzi*, competing in Class 4, completed the race in 8 hours, 3 minutes and 14 seconds. His consort, Datin Paduka Seri Afzaa Fadani Abdul Aziz, also joined the race.

The Class 4 race was won by the Kimikimi team from Poland in 7:46:26, while second place went to Kesini from Malaysia in 8:01:56.

The nine-day RMSIR, held from Nov 14 to 22 and featuring 23 teams, will continue with inshore races around Pulau Langkawi today.

First organised in 1990, RMSIR is the second-oldest sailing championship in Asia and was conceived by the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, when His Royal Highness was the Raja Muda of Selangor.

Tang Jie-Ee Wei, Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin in semis Down Under

TWO Malaysian pairs – professional men's doubles duo Goh Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin Rumsani and mixed doubles world champions Chen Tang Jie-Toh Ee Wei – continued their fine form as they marched into the semifinals of the Australian Open 2025 in Sydney yesterday.

Second seeds Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin were forced to dig deep before beating the South Korean-Malaysian combination of Choi Sol Gyu-Goh V Shem 21-13, 20-22, 22-20 in a gruelling 69-minute quarterfinal match of the Super 500 tournament held in Quaycentre, Olympic Boulevard.

Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin will be up against unseeded Indonesians Raymond Indra-Nikolaus Joaquin, who upset Malaysia's third-seeded Man Wei Chong-Tee Kai Wun 21-15, 19-21, 21-15.

Earlier, Tang Jie-Ee Wei lived up to their billing as the top seeds by notching their fourth win in five meetings over Taiwanese duo Ye Hong Wei-Nicole Gonzales Chan, at 21-17, 21-15, in 37 minutes.

The world No. 4 will play Pakkapon Teeraratsakul-Sapsiree Taerattanachai of Thailand in the last four today.

The Thais staged a comeback and brushed aside the challenge from Taiwan's Yang Po-Hsuan-Hu Ling Fang, winning 17-21, 21-15, 21-12.



Smashing bronze

Mixed doubles pair wins nation's first medal at Deaflympics

Mixed doubles pair Boon Wei Ying (left) and Edmund Teo in action during the third-place playoff match at the 2025 Deaflympics. – BERNAMAPIC

NATIONAL mixed doubles pair, Edmund Teo-Boon Wei Ying, opened the Malaysian contingent's medal tally at the Deaflympics 2025 by winning a bronze medal after defeating their Indian opponents in the third and fourth place playoff at the Keio Arena Tokyo yesterday.

Edmund-Wei Ying concluded the 39-minute match in straight sets, beating Abhinav Sharma-Jerlin Jayaratchagan 21-13, 23-21, thereby overcoming the disappointment of being eliminated in the semifinals of their gold medal pursuit in badminton.

Speaking to reporters through a sign language interpreter, Edmund admitted their journey to the podium was challenging, making the victory even more meaningful.

"If you follow the match point earlier, around the 20th point, I was quite confident we could win, but (it's okay). We still gave our all for Malaysia during the match," he said.

His partner, Wei Ying, who appeared emotional immediately after the match, said the feeling stemmed from their failure to secure a spot in the final but expressed gratitude for today's success.

"Even though we didn't get the gold, we got the bronze for Malaysia, and we are grateful to the coaching staff who constantly motivated

both of us for the Deaflympics 2025," she added.

Yesterday's success also served as "sweet revenge" as Edmund-Wei Ying managed to turn the tables on Abhinav-Jerlin, the same pair who had defeated them in the final of the 2022 edition of the Deaflympics, where they had to settle for a silver medal.

Seven days after the Games officially opened last Saturday, the bronze medal secured yesterday marks Malaysia's first medal at the Deaflympics 2025, although the target of three gold medals set by the Malaysian Deaf Sports Association (MSDEAF) has not yet been achieved.

Yesterday, the women's doubles pair of Wei Ying and Foo Zoo Tung, the defending champions of the Games, were defeated in the quarterfinals by unseeded Chinese duo Jiang Jialei-Zhang Heng Yan, 13-21, 8-21.

There was more heartbreak in the men's and women's 200m after all the national athletes failed to advance past the first round at the Komazawa Metropolitan Stadium.

Nur Andrina Zainudin was the first Malaysian to take to the tracks, finishing fifth out of eight runners in the first heat of the opening round with a time of 27.85 seconds, thus failing to qualify for the semifinals.

The heat saw Elaine Janice Den Exter of the Netherlands topping the field in 25.93s,

followed by Ukraine's Kristina Kiniaikina (25.97s) and Kenya's Beryl Atieno Wamira (26.51s).

Under the competition format for the women's 200m, only the top three finishers from each of the four heats and the next four fastest runners advance to today's semifinals.

Three Malaysian male athletes suffered the same fate, failing to place within the top two of the eight heats or among the next eight fastest runners who qualify for the semifinals.

The first Malaysian representative, Hazrul Shah Hamri, clocked 23.41s in the second heat to finish fifth.

Southeast Asia's Deaf Sprint King, Muhammad Zamir Azman, was also fifth in his heat with a time of 23.31s, while his twin brother, Muhammad Zumar, finished fourth in the seventh heat with 23.48s.

Meanwhile, head coach Amiluddin Mohd Amin said strong winds and cold weather affected the national athletes' performance.

"I asked them, and they said the strong headwind affected their run. To me, it's part of the process, and they just need to continue training, that's all.

"In addition, competing at a high-level meet can have psychological effects. Seeing the size of other athletes, their previous records – all that can influence them," he told Bernama.

Melaka duo join Speedy Tigers

THE Speedy Tigers squad will field two new faces for the 2025 Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, which will be held from Nov 23 to 30 in Ipoh.

In a statement yesterday, the Malaysian Hockey Confederation said the two players are defender Muhammad Nur Asyraf Ishak and central midfielder Zufar Saiful Marsita, who were selected after excelling while representing Melaka in the 2025 Tun Abdul Razak Cup.

Speedy Tigers head coach Sarjit Singh expressed hope that the newcomers would make an

impact on the national team.

"We have two new faces for this year's edition, both from Melaka, who performed well in the TNB Tun Abdul Razak Cup 2025.

"This is their first major tournament, and 20-year-old Zufar scored two goals in friendly matches.

"As part of our preparations, we played several friendlies against Korea, India and the National Men's Junior Squad to test combinations and assess player readiness," he said.

National senior men's team manager Datuk Ahmad Najmi Abdul Razak said this is a golden opportunity for both players to prove themselves on the international stage.

He said the 31st edition of the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup is considered prestigious, with two world hockey giants – Belgium (ranked third globally) and India (7th) – joining the competition in Ipoh. All participating teams have their own agendas for the tournament.

"Belgium and India are in

preparation for the FIH Pro League starting this December, while teams such as Malaysia (13th), Korea (15th) and Canada (20th) are fine-tuning tactics ahead of the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers," he said.

Malaysia will open the tournament against New Zealand on Sunday, followed by matches against Canada (Nov 24), India (Nov 26), Belgium (Nov 27) and South Korea (Nov 29).

Only the top two teams in the round-robin format will advance to the final on Nov 30. – Bernama



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Gun test

Leaders Arsenal face uncertainty as Gabriel injury clouds Spurs clash

Arsenal's Gabriel (centre) and teammates celebrate after the Premier League match against Tottenham Hotspur in April. – REUTERS/SPIC



ARSENAL'S preparations for Monday's (12.30am Malaysian time) home clash with Tottenham Hotspur have been hit by uncertainty over centreback Gabriel, whose thigh injury is expected to rule him out of the showdown.

Gabriel has been a cornerstone of Mikel Arteta's defence this season but limped off during Brazil's friendly against Senegal last week, and his absence would leave the Premier League leaders without their most dominant aerial presence.

Arsenal return from the international break four points clear of second-placed Manchester City but Arteta's side stumbled last time out in a 2-2 draw at Sunderland.

They have conceded just five League goals all season but Gabriel's injury – amid media reports that he could be out until January – plus doubts over the fitness of Martin Odegaard and Gabriel Martinelli among others – could test Arsenal's strength-in-depth in a fixture that is always fiercely competitive.

"Gabriel is a top defender and I don't care who comes in, it will be tough to take. Arsenal have good players but there aren't many Gabriels around," former England forward Alan Shearer said.

"Defensively he's rock solid and has played a huge part in what Arsenal are doing, but certainly from set-pieces.

"He's a huge cog in what they do in terms of scoring goals and making it very difficult for defences as well.

"Although Arsenal have a good replacement

to come in and replace him, they're losing probably the best centre-half in the Premier League."

Arsenal could replace Gabriel with Ecuador international Piero Hincapie or Spaniard Cristhian Mosquera, while Riccardo Calafiori, if fit, could switch from left back to centre back.

Tottenham have been buoyed by a much-improved defence under new manager Thomas Frank and have the best away record in the league. Spurs sit fifth and have shown they can trouble anyone on the road, having won at Manchester City earlier this season.

However, long-term injuries to James Maddison, Dejan Kulusevski and Dominic Solanke have blunted their attacking edge, leaving winger Mohammed Kudus, who should himself be back from injury, to shoulder the creative load this season.

Arsenal have dominated recent derbies, unbeaten in the last six meetings, but unpredictable Spurs' pressing game makes them dangerous opponents. A win for the visitors would tighten the title race and inject fresh intrigue into the top-four battle.

Manchester City head to Newcastle United (Sun 1.30am) where Erling Haaland's firepower will be on show. The Norway striker has been in devastating form, spearheading a City side that looks every inch a title contender.

Pep Guardiola's men return from the international break riding a four-game winning run in all competitions, including a 3-0 statement victory over Liverpool that marked the Spaniard's 1,000th game in management.

With Arsenal's recent slip leading to a narrowing of the gap at the top, City will be eager to maintain momentum with Haaland showing no signs of slowing down, having bagged 32 goals in 20 games for club and country this season.

Newcastle, meanwhile, remain a puzzle.

Eddie Howe's team have oscillated between excellence – seen in League Cup and Champions League wins – and Premier League defeats that have left them 14th, two points above the drop zone.

Which version of the Magpies turn up could define the contest.

Liverpool will look to shake off their post-title hangover against struggling visitors Nottingham Forest today (11pm).

Arne Slot's champions have plummeted to eighth after five defeats in six League games, with their humbling at Manchester City before the break capping a miserable run.

There were flickers of revival with wins over Aston Villa and Real Madrid, but consistency remains elusive.

Forest arrive buoyed by a 3-1 win over Leeds United and a gritty draw with Manchester United under Sean Dyche, though they still sit second-bottom and are winless away from home.

Liverpool are eight points adrift of Arsenal and cannot afford another slip. With goalkeeper Alisson close to returning and Anfield's roar behind them, the Reds will expect to win.

Manchester United host Everton on Tuesday (4am) looking to extend a five-game unbeaten

FIXTURES ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

All matches at 11pm
Malaysian time unless stated

TODAY

- Burnley vs Chelsea (8.30pm)
- B'mouth vs West Ham
- Brighton vs Brentford
- Fulham vs Sunderland
- Liverpool vs Forest
- Wolves vs Crystal Palace

TOMORROW

- Newcastle vs Man City (1.30am)
- Leeds vs Aston Villa (10pm)

- MONDAY (12.30am)
- Arsenal vs Tottenham

- TUESDAY (4am)
- Man Utd vs Everton

run under Ruben Amorim. They have climbed within a point of the top four, with Bryan Mbeumo's scoring streak a key factor in their recent resurgence. – Reuters