

ASIA'S DEEPENING OIL CRUNCH TRIGGERS FUEL HOARDING, PRICE HIKES **p22**

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Anthony Loke



THE EDGE CEO MORNING BRIEF

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TO GET ON EMAILING LIST
ceomorningbrief@bizedge.com

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THE EDGE
MALAYSIA (266980-X)

TEL . 603-77218000

Level 3, Menara KLK, 1 Jalan PJU 7/6,
Mutiar Damansara, 47810, Petaling Jaya,
Selangor, Malaysia

PUBLISHER + CEO . Ho Kay Tat
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF . Kathy Fong
MANAGING DIRECTOR, BUSINESS . Sharon Teh
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER . Lim Shiew Yui
EDITORS . Jenny Ng . Tan Choe Choe

TO CONTACT EDITORS: eeditor@bizedge.com
TO ADVERTISE: advertising@bizedge.com

H O M E

Anwar: National energy supply secure, contingency plans ready to safeguard economy

Bernama

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on Thursday said Malaysia's oil and gas supply remains secure and that the government will continue to closely monitor global developments amid the current conflict in the Middle East.

In a social media post, the prime minister said the Madani government



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK/ANWAR IBRAHIM

is ensuring Malaysia remains on alert, with contingency measures in place to protect the people and safeguard the country's economic continuity.

Earlier Thursday afternoon, Anwar, who is also finance minister, chaired the 2026 National Finance Council (MKewN) meeting with the state chief ministers at the Ministry of Finance.

"In this meeting, I reported that Malaysia's economic fundamentals remain strong

despite the uncertainty arising from the conflict in the Middle East.

"Gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2025 exceeded projections, while the unemployment rate is at its lowest level in 11 years," he said.

Read also: PM Anwar calls on Malaysians to draw lessons from Middle East conflict, strengthen unity

PUTRAJAYA (March 5): The current US-Iran conflict in the Middle East has not yet affected the security of the country's food supply as most of Malaysia's food import sources do not involve those countries, said Minister of Agriculture and Food Security Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu.

He said among the countries involved in exporting food to Malaysia are India, Pakistan, Asean countries, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil and Argentina.

"The war took place in the Middle East, these countries were not really involved in food matters in Malaysia. Over there, we are involved in exports, especially in Dubai.

"So far, we have not been affected in any way in terms of food security, but we do not know how long this conflict will last and if it lasts, there will likely be an increase in the price of imported goods

US-Iran conflict: National food supply not affected, says Mohamad Sabu

Bernama

and so on," he told the media after the Ihya Ramadan Programme with the Prime Minister here on Thursday.

Mohamad said the country's current physical stock of rice can cover the needs for a period of between five and seven months.

"In terms of rice supply, we do have a

buffer stock, which if anything happens, God willing, we have enough supply for five months, and if we take into account the stock in the shops, it is enough for seven months.

"In terms of rice, God willing (enough), for other things, we do have crisis management measures on standby if anything happens, God willing we will act," he said.

Meanwhile, Mohamad said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim also chaired the joint meeting of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security top management.

He said among the matters discussed were the issues of governance and governance of the agro-food sector, infrastructure development to support the five-season padi planting programme within two years, national food security and administrative ethics.

DAP's highest internal body insists royal inquiry necessary to probe 'corporate mafia' claims

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KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): The Democratic Action Party (DAP) said on Thursday the government needs to fully investigate allegations of 'corporate mafia' with a royal commission of inquiry.

The party's central executive committee has decided to take serious note of the allegations on the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) being used as a tool to achieve personal interests, DAP secretary general Anthony Loke Siew Fook said in a statement following a meeting on March 4.

"The government needs to address this issue effectively to defend the credibility of the MACC through the establishment of a royal commission of inquiry to thoroughly investigate the allegations and recommend measures to prevent abuse of power within the institution," he said.

The decision is significant, as the 30-member committee is DAP's highest decision-making body responsible for setting internal directions and policies. DAP also holds the largest number of federal seats in the administration of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

A royal commission of inquiry has broad powers, including to summon any persons in Malaysia to testify and compel the production of documents. The panel, formed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, is usually held only to investigate high-profile matters of public interests.

The 'corporate mafia' allegations came

into the spotlight in a *Bloomberg* article *Who's Watching Malaysia's Anti-Corruption Watchdog?* and centre around takeover of companies listed on Bursa Malaysia in collusion with high-ranking officials from MACC.

The article alleges a takeover scheme through the use of intimidation by MACC to pressure executives and shareholders to resign or sell their shares at heavily discounted prices to a group of connected businessmen. MACC and its chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki have denied the allegations.

DAP has also urged the government to re-table the Federal Constitution amendment to limit the prime minister's term to 10 years in the next parliamentary session following the Dewan Rakyat's failure to pass the bill earlier this week, Loke said.

The decision is significant, as the 30-member committee is DAP's highest decision-making body responsible for setting internal directions and policies. DAP also holds the largest number of federal seats in the administration of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Datuk Fahmi Fadzil, the government's spokesperson, said on Wednesday that the proposed bill will be retabled at the next sitting in June.

The committee's meeting also decided to support the government's decision to refer the bill separating the roles of the Attorney General and Public Prosecutor to the special select committee, Loke said.

Loke also said the party is committed to improving the accountability and transparency of the appointment process for both positions through DAP representatives Ramkarpal Singh and Syahredzan Johan in the parliamentary committee, he added.



Selangor sultan backs MACC's push for greater integrity, accountability

Bernama

SHAH ALAM (March 5): Selangor's Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah has expressed support for the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) initiatives to strengthen the culture of integrity and accountability in the state.

The MACC, in a statement, said His Royal Highness conveyed this after granting an audience to the Selangor MACC director, Mohd Azwan Ramli, at Istana Bukit Kayangan here on Thursday.

The sultan of Selangor was briefed on the latest developments in corruption prevention efforts and in strengthening institutional cooperation to enhance the integrity of the state's administration.

"Several other issues in Selangor were also highlighted, including governance challenges, strengthening the governance system and efforts to increase transparency in the public service.

"The audience granted by the sultan of Selangor also reflected the MACC's ongoing commitment towards ensuring a state administration that is transparent, of high integrity and corruption-free for the well-being of the people," it added.

Also present was Selangor MACC (Operations) deputy director Khairul Izwan Karim.



DAP secretary general Anthony Loke Siew Fook (third from left, seated), its national chairman Gobind Singh Deo (fourth from left, seated) and members of its central executive committee after its monthly meeting on Wednesday.

Boardroom tussle erupts at NexG after Ishak Ismail-linked company emerges as largest shareholder

BY IZZUL IKRAM
theedgemalaysia.com

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): A boardroom tussle has erupted at NexG Bhd (KL:NEXG) — which holds RM2.46 billion worth of contracts in the supply of Malaysian passport booklets and identity cards — following the emergence of Raya Aviation Holdings, which is linked to Datuk Ishak Ismail, as its largest shareholder.

On Thursday, a day after Raya Aviation's entry, NexG's board suspended executive chairman and CEO Datuk Abu Hanifah Noordin amid a review of the company's investments in other public-listed companies, according to a bourse filing.

The board also appointed an external professional to verify the March 4 shareholding changes related to Raya Aviation's acquisition of a 20.4% stake by taking control of two private companies — Skyelimit Alliance Sdn Bhd and Trendrove Tradin Sdn Bhd.

Skyelimit Alliance was linked to NexG's former executive deputy chairman Tan Sri Mohd Khairul Adib Abd Rahman, while Trendrove was linked to executive director Datuk Ab Hamid Mohamad Hanipah.

The other faction, comprising Hanifah, the founder of NexG, Velocity Capital Sdn Bhd — the financing arm of Velocity Capital Partners Bhd (KL:VELOCITY) — and Siti Nur Aishah Ishak called for an extraordinary general meeting to remove seven directors and appoint eight new ones. They collectively hold at least 10% of the company.

Bid to replace board, appoint Ishak

Ishak, a known close associate of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in the 90s, is among the eight directors whom Hanifah, together with Siti Nur and Velocity Capital, seek to appoint to NexG's board.

The others include Raya Airways group managing director Mohamad Najib Ishak, Mohd Azmi Mat Nayan, Lt Col (R) Roseli Abdul Gani, Datuk Anas Alam Faizli, Datuk Amirudin Abdul Wahab, Lt Col (R) Khairudin Dahlan and Datuk Seri Muthanna Abdullah.

The seven directors they seek to remove include Datuk Chong Loong Men, Aswath Ramakrishnan, and Kunal Tayal, who joined the board in mid-November last year. Syed Farid Syed Ahmad Al-Attas, Mohamed Fairuz Mohamed Fauzy, Badrul Hisham Abdul Aziz and Mohd Zafil Ibrahim are also on the list. They were appointed on Oct 16, 2025. Ab Hamid was not among the directors proposed for removal.

The trio are proposing that the EGM be held on April 3, 2026.

However, the existing board said in the bourse filing that it has "great concerns"



over the notices' validity and is seeking independent legal advice on the matter. "In the meantime, the company will not publish the notices (of EGM) in whatever manner/form until the validity is ascertained," it added.

Raya Aviation, parent of cargo carrier Raya Airways, is 99-owned by CIMB Islamic Trustees Bhd, according to Companies Commission of Malaysia's records. Raya Aviation's directors comprise Mohamad Najib Ishak and Mohamad Yusof Ishak. According to previous reports, Mohamad Najib, Mohamad Yusof and Siti Nur Aishah are Ishak's children.

Hanifah suspended amid probe into NexG's PLC investments

NexG's board explained that Hanifah's suspension is related to an ongoing review in the company's investments in quoted shares, which it noted recently attracted public atten-

tion due to heavy paper losses. It emphasised the suspension of Hanifah's executive power as an administrative measure intended to safeguard the integrity of the review and does not constitute any determination of wrongdoing.

The board noted the RM145.6 million fair value loss on certain quoted investments, which resulted in its net loss of RM130.88 million for the third quarter ended Dec 31, 2025 (3QFY2026). A committee, assisted by independent third-party professionals, looking into the "appropriateness" of the investments, had been formed in November 2025, it said.

"In light of recent developments that may affect the independence and integrity of the ongoing review process, the board has resolved to temporarily suspend the executive powers and functions of Hanifah to allow the committee and its advisers to continue their work without undue influence and in accordance with the company's governance procedures and standards operating practices," NexG said.

According to the filings with Bursa, NexG invested RM88 million to buy 220 million shares or a 9.53% stake in MMAG Holdings Bhd (KL:MMAG) at 40 sen each in March 2025. MMAG's share price has since dropped 93% to close at three sen on Thursday (March 5). Meanwhile, in August 2025, its 32.61% stake in Clasita Holdings Bhd, now NexG Bina Bhd (KL:NEXGBINA), and 414.31 million warrants, bought for RM93.25 million, are now worth RM20.1 million, an 80% loss, with shares at three sen and warrants at one sen.

NexG bought part of the MMAG stake (7.58%) from Chan Swee Ying — the spouse of Victor Chin Boon Long who stepped down as NexG chief operating officer in end-September last year.

Besides, NexG also bought a 51% stake in Innov8tif Holdings Sdn Bhd for RM40 million cash from Revenue Group Bhd in November 2024.

Hanifah, who founded the company formerly known as Datasonic Group Bhd, currently owns a 9.58% interest in NexG. He has come out of retirement twice to lead the company. In his latest stint, he rejoined NexG on August 22, 2024 as its executive deputy chairman and CEO. On Feb 12, 2025, he was redesignated to executive chairman and CEO.

Shares in NexG ended 2.5 sen or 9.26% higher at 29.5 sen on Thursday, valuing the company at RM1.1 billion.



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PUTRAJAYA (March 5): The Royal Malaysian Police have recorded a statement from an individual to assist in investigations into allegations of a plot to overthrow the government and undermine national stability, reportedly involving a local influential figure and an international media agency.

Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Datuk Seri Mohd Khalid Ismail said the individual voluntarily came forward to give a statement after a report on the matter was lodged on Feb 26.

He said the statement was lengthy and required time for the police to thoroughly examine.

“So far we have only recorded a statement from one individual, but there are three to four more people we plan to call to assist in the investigation,” he told reporters after the Home Ministry’s monthly assembly on Thursday.

Mohd Khalid said the investigation requires a comprehensive and careful approach as it involves national security matters.

He added that police have identified several individuals and are working to obtain their statements.

The investigation will also examine the possibility of foreign involvement, although this will depend on further devel-

Police record first statement in probe into alleged plot to topple govt — IGP

Bernama

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Inspector-General of Police
Datuk Seri Mohd Khalid Ismail

opments in the probe, he said.

When asked whether the wife of the late Tun Daim Zainuddin, Toh Puan Na’imah Abdul Khalid, would be called to assist in the investigation, Mohd Khalid said the matter is still under review, and that action will be taken in stages based on the progress of the investigation.

He noted that the probe has so far focused primarily on local individuals, while any potential involvement of foreign parties will depend on further findings.

Mohd Khalid stressed that matters involving national security must be handled carefully to avoid causing unnecessary public concern.

“We want the country to remain on the right track towards a more progressive future,” he said.

On March 3, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim revealed that the alleged attempt to overthrow the government involved local elements using the influence of international media and institutions, including prominent Zionist groups.

Anwar, who is also the finance minister, said preliminary police investigations found that the movement was based abroad and had substantial financial resources to plan strategies aimed at disrupting and destabilising the current government.

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has refuted recent claims made by Chai Jin Shern (James Chai) as inaccurate and misleading, while specifically dismissing as “completely untrue” his assertion that the commission failed to contact him before issuing a notice to trace him.

In a strongly-worded statement on Thursday, the anti-graft agency revealed that investigating officers made several attempts to reach Chai, who had been traced to the United Kingdom, beginning Feb 24, 2026 via WhatsApp, but received no response.

After multiple unsuccessful attempts, the investigating officer’s number was eventually blocked by Chai’s telephone number on Feb 26, 2026.

“Therefore, the claim that the MACC did not attempt to contact him before issuing the notice is completely untrue.

Attempts to portray normal investigative procedures as acts of persecution against an individual are unwarranted and made in bad faith,” the anti-graft said.

The MACC also firmly denied that its recent press briefing was specifically “targeted” at him, clarifying that the conference was its regular monthly media briefing covering multiple ongoing investigations in-

MACC refutes Chai’s claims, says contact was attempted before issuing notice

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“

If James Chai has nothing to hide, he should present himself and cooperate with the investigation.”

cluding Op Middlemen, the illegal e-waste case, Op Heart, investigations involving IJM, and Op Godfather.

The commission emphasised that a notice to trace an individual is a standard investigative procedure used by enforcement agencies, issued only after various efforts to contact the individual have failed, and does not constitute a criminal accusation.

“MACC reiterates that the Commission strictly adheres to the principle of ‘presumption of innocence’, meaning that a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise. Therefore, being called to assist in an investigation does not mean that the person is guilty or has committed an offence.”

The MACC noted that it issues between two to five such notices weekly and that 12 individuals including a federal minister have already cooperated in this investigation.

“If James Chai has nothing to hide, he should present himself and cooperate with the investigation,” the commission said.

“MACC wishes to emphasise that no one is above the law. The investigation will continue to be conducted professionally and based on evidence, and any individual called to assist in an investigation should provide full cooperation to the authorities rather than evade the process or deliberately create misleading public narratives,” it added.

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): An estimated 60% of Employees Provident Fund (EPF) members can potentially reach the basic savings level of around RM390,000 at the age of 60 by 2030, said Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan.

He said that 3.1 million or 41.2% of active EPF members in the formal sector, who are Malaysian citizens aged between 18 years and 55 years, had reached the basic savings level by age as of the end of 2025.

“This shows that there are still 4.42 million or 58.8% of formal sector members who are Malaysian citizens who have not reached the minimum savings level targeted to ensure sufficient savings upon retirement,” he said during a question-and-answer session in the Dewan Negara on Thursday.

Amir Hamzah was replying to a supplementary question from Senator Datuk Ng Keng Heng regarding the government’s official estimate of the percentage of citizens who are expected not to reach the sufficient minimum savings level by retirement age in the next 10 years to 20 years.

Meanwhile, Amir Hamzah said the government, through the EPF, is committed to ensuring that the erosion of basic savings due to early withdrawals can be controlled by introducing the retirement income adequacy (RIA) benchmark.

60% EPF members to reach basic savings level of around RM390,000 by 2030 — Amir Hamzah

Bernama

THE EDGE FILE PHOTO



He said RIA functions as a guide to the adequacy of retirement savings, helping members assess their savings position before making withdrawal decisions, thus encouraging more prudent long-term financial planning.

“At the same time, several measures to strengthen savings continue to be implemented, including account restructuring, namely the introduction of Flexible Accounts, encouraging voluntary contributions, and more active promotions involving i-Simpan, i-Saraan, and i-Topup.

“EPF is also intensifying its awareness campaign to encourage members not to make full or lump sum withdrawals, which can affect income after retirement, but instead choose the withdrawal option in monthly payments,” he said.

As a note, the number of active employers registered with the EPF increased by 4.2% to 640,391 as of December 2025 from 614,563 in 2024, while the number of formal sector workers also grew by 3.3% to 8.2 million in 2025 from 7.9 million in 2024.

This positive development contributed to the growth of annual contributions of EPF members who are Malaysian citizens to RM120 billion in 2025, 12% higher than RM107.1 billion in 2024.

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): The government has defended setting up a minister-led Special Select Committee to review the bill separating the roles of the Attorney General and Public Prosecutor, including the Public Prosecutor’s accountability mechanism, after criticism.

Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said from the Prime Minister’s Department (Law and Institutional Reform) moved the motion to refer the bill to the committee after its second reading in the Dewan Rakyat. The motion was approved by voice vote, and Azalina will chair the 11-member committee, which includes members of parliament (MPs) from both government and opposition.

The Legal Affairs Division of the Prime Minister’s Department (BHEUU) statement on Thursday said this follows past practice, such as the 2004 Penal Code amendments, the 2022 constitutional amendment on party-hopping, and the 2022 Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill, all reviewed by minister-led committees.

The committee operates under Dewan Rakyat authority, with recommendations agreed collectively by government and opposition MPs before submission.

The government remains accountable to Parliament under Article 43(3) of the Federal Constitution, making this review part of parliamentary checks and balances.

Govt defends minister-led Special Committee to review AG and Public Prosecutor role separation bill

BY CHOY NYEN YIAU
theedgemalaysia.com



Minister in charge of law and institutional reform
Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said.

The government division highlighted that the proposal has been discussed with MPs across parties, including the chairperson of the Special Select Committee on Human Rights, Elections, and Institutional Reforms Selayang MP William Leong, other MPs from Jelutong, Kota Melaka, Besut, and Pendang, and chairperson of the Special Select Committee on Legal Review Rita Sarimah Anak Patrick Insol. The Attorney General’s Chambers and BHEUU presented the reform plan to the committees on Feb 26, and March 2, 2026.

The committee will suggest any necessary amendments and submit a report within three months, with an extension if needed.

The bill in its current form has the Yang di-Pertuan Agong appoint the Public Prosecutor based on the Judicial and Legal Service Commission’s recommendation, after consulting the Conference of Rulers. The term set was for seven years with resignation allowed.

Removal is only for incapacity, misconduct, or misbehaviour, via a tribunal chaired by a former Attorney General, including a former Public Prosecutor, a former Chief Secretary, and at least three former Federal Court judges. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong may suspend the Public Prosecutor while the tribunal reports.

KUALA LUMPUR (March 6): Economists are expecting Bank Negara Malaysia to keep the overnight policy rate (OPR) unchanged throughout 2026, even as financial markets begin pricing in a potential rate hike amid escalating Middle East tensions.

This follows the central bank's decision yesterday to hold the benchmark rate at 2.75%, a move unanimously predicted by a *Bloomberg* poll.

While economists are leaning towards a hold as BNM signaled a preference for policy continuity — unless geopolitical developments worsen dramatically — fixed-income investors, including those from JPMorgan Asset Management, are positioning for higher rates.

Bloomberg reported on Thursday that ringgit interest-rate swaps are now pricing in more than a 20% probability of a quarter-point rate hike within the next 12 months. This shift places Malaysia as a “hawkish outlier” in Southeast Asia, where regional peers are largely expected to stay on hold or cut rates further.

The report noted that the rate hike case is gaining traction as a sustained energy shock looms, while Malaysia's growth remains relatively robust — hitting 6.3% in the fourth quarter of 2025. These factors, alongside potential semiconductor price hikes, could drive inflation high enough to force BNM's hand.

Nevertheless, institutional economists maintain that an imminent policy shift is unlikely. UOB noted that BNM's latest statement, while setting a more cautious tone given new external risks, signals a preference for policy continuity.

“The language signals a preference for

Economists expect steady OPR in 2026 after BNM's latest hold, though market bets on hawkish tilt

BY IZZUL IKRAM
theedgemalaysia.com

policy continuity unless geopolitical developments worsen dramatically, or demand-driven inflation unexpectedly accelerates,” UOB observed in a note on Thursday.

“Presently, the Middle East conflicts remain very fluid. Potential price effects from this event risk are assessed as largely supply-driven. Additionally, current developments have not materially changed the global and/or domestic growth and inflation dynamics just yet,” it added.

Potential pressure points

How the conflict evolves over the next few weeks and months, however, could materially change this picture and have a real bearing on the next monetary policy meeting in May.

A prolonged conflict would seriously impact demand for Malaysia's electronics exports, Pantheon Macroeconomics Asia

economist Meekita Gupta flagged, though higher commodity prices might provide a partial hedge.

CIMB highlighted that the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz and QatarEnergy's force majeure declaration on Wednesday could introduce broader second-round effects on inflation. “These include upward pressure on electricity tariffs through the monthly automatic fuel adjustment mechanism, as well as higher goods transportation costs and increased petrochemical-linked input prices.”

A US\$10 (RM39.41) per barrel increase in Brent may translate to a 0.1 percentage point increase in Malaysia's headline inflation, assuming subsidised petrol is held at RM1.99 per litre, CIMB noted.

Despite these risks, it maintained its unchanged OPR forecast for 2026, noting that headline inflation remains contained below 2%.

For now, the domestic growth engine remains the primary anchor for a hold. Kenanga noted that while growth may moderate slightly in the second half of 2026 due to base effects, it is unlikely to warrant a rate cut, especially since fiscal policy retains enough breathing room to support demand, if necessary.

Read also:

BNM keeps OPR at 2.75% amid global uncertainties

Rate hike expectations build in Malaysia over next 12 months

KUALA LUMPUR (March 6): Petroliaam Nasional Bhd (PETRONAS) has activated its business continuity protocols for its United Arab Emirates (UAE) operations to ensure operational and financial performance across the region.

In an email response to *Bernama*, the national oil company said as part of these measures, the group has commenced the temporary relocation of personnel from its operations in Abu Dhabi and Dubai as a precautionary step.

“All operations in the UAE continue to be managed through alternate arrangements. Operations outside of the UAE across the region continue as usual,” it added.

On Wednesday, QatarEnergy declared force majeure on its liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies following the suspension of production at several key export facilities.

Force majeure in the oil and gas industry is a contractual provision that relieves

PETRONAS triggers continuity protocols, relocates UAE staff

BY SITI RADZIAH HAMZAH
Bernama

parties from performing obligations, such as supply or exploration, due to unforeseeable and uncontrollable events, including natural disasters, wars, pandemics, or government actions that make performance impossible.

It requires a specific clause, timely notice and strict compliance and does not extend to mere economic hardship or market downturns.

In February, PETRONAS' subsidiary, PETRONAS LNG Ltd (PLL), signed a 20-year liquefied natural gas (LNG) sale and purchase agreement (SPA) with QatarEnergy, marking the first long-term LNG supply agreement between the two companies.

Under the SPA, PLL will offtake up to two million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of LNG from QatarEnergy over a period of 20 years.

PETRONAS said it would continue to assess any potential material impact on its operations and financials and would also communicate proactively in accordance with its disclosure obligations.

“PETRONAS is committed to fulfilling its obligations as a responsible operator and will continue to take all necessary measures to safeguard its people, assets, and operations across the region,” it added.

TPG said to consider sale or IPO of Asia OneHealthcare — Bloomberg

BY ELFFIE CHEW & JULIA FIORETTI
Bloomberg

(March 5): TPG Inc is considering options for Asia OneHealthcare Sdn Bhd, including a sale or initial public offering (IPO), amid increasing deal activity for private equity-owned assets, according to people familiar with the matter.

TPG has been speaking with advisers working on a separate IPO by Sunway Healthcare Holdings Bhd to evaluate a course of action, the people said, asking not to be identified because the deliberations are private. A deal might value the Kuala Lumpur-based medical services provider at as much as RM30 billion (US\$7.6 billion), two of the people said.

Considerations are preliminary and no final decisions have been made, the people said. TPG may also decide to keep its stake in the healthcare firm, the people added, without disclosing the size of the holding.



Subang Jaya Medical Centre is one of the many assets Asia Onehealthcare owns in Malaysia.

A representative for TPG declined to comment.

Hong Leong Group and TPG acquired a batch of hospitals from Asia OneHealthcare, then known as Columbia Asia Healthcare, for about US\$1.2 billion in 2019. The company has expanded both organically and via acquisitions, including the purchase of the hospital unit of Australia's Ramsay Health Care Ltd and Malaysian conglomerate Sime Darby Bhd (KL:SIME) for RM5.7 billion in 2023.

Other shareholders in Asia OneHealthcare include Abu Dhabi Investment Authority and Malaysia's Employees Provident Fund (EPF).

TPG has been involved in other recent deals in Southeast Asia, including agreeing

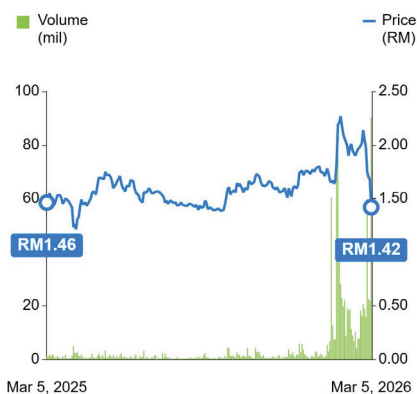
to sell a majority stake in XCL Education Holdings Pte Ltd to KKR & Co in a transaction valuing the school operator at about US\$1.3 billion. KKR also led a group that agreed to acquire data centre operator STT GDC Pte Ltd for US\$5.2 billion.

Sunway Healthcare, meanwhile, is expected to list on March 18 in a RM2.86 billion IPO, which would be the biggest debut in Malaysia nine years. Malayan Banking Bhd (KL:MAYBANK), AmInvestment Bank Bhd, UBS Group AG, HSBC Holdings Plc and Jefferies Financial Group Inc are among banks arranging the IPO.



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AirAsia X reverses early 2026 rally



As at market close on Mar 5, 2026
Source: Bursa Malaysia

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AirAsia X dives in active trade amid selldown in global airlines

BY JOHN LAI
theedgemalaysia.com

est since September 2025. The stock has lost some 28% of its value since the start of the US-Israel attack on Iran over the weekend. Singapore Airlines Ltd has fallen nearly 7%, while Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd dropped more than 8%.

Analysts have warned of mounting pressure on the airline's earnings, flagging the strong price correlation between crude oil and jet fuel. Every US\$1 (RM3.94) increase in jet fuel costs could shave off RM80 million or 5.3% from AirAsia X's bottom line, according to Hong Leong Investment Bank's estimates.

Oil prices have surged with the global benchmark Brent hitting US\$84 per barrel due to the mounting supply disruption concerns from the conflict.

The sharp decline of AirAsia X on Thursday also triggered an automatic suspension in intra-day short-selling. Trading of its shares under the intra-day short-selling framework will resume at 8.30am on March 6, according to a special announcement.

Trading activity was unusually heavy on AirAsia X shares, with volume surging to 90.26 million shares, making the counter the most traded across Bursa Malaysia.

AirAsia X has reversed all of the gains made since the start of 2025 from optimism over a stronger ringgit and Visit Malaysia Year 2026 tourism prospects. The stock is now down 18.4% on a year-to-date basis.



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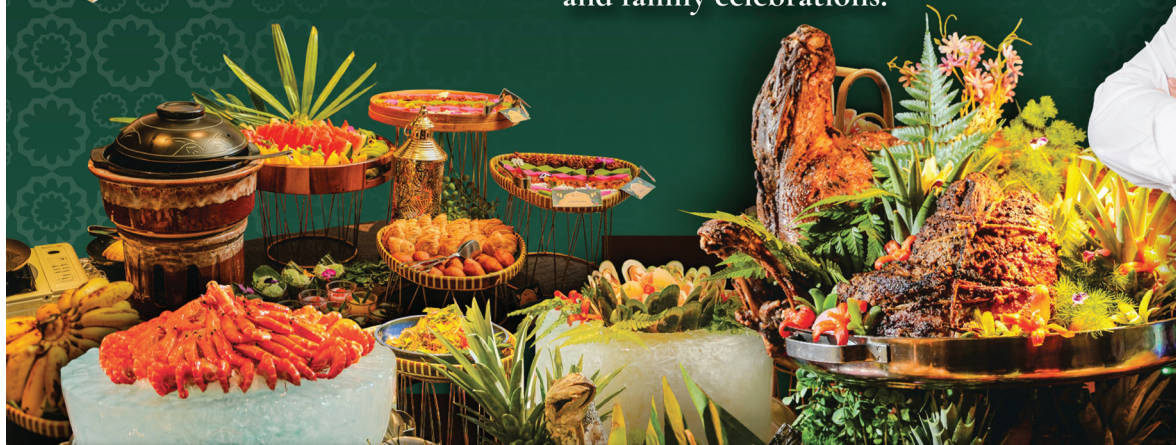
KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): AirAsia X Bhd (KL:AAX) fell on Thursday amid a global selldown in airline stocks as escalating Middle East tensions threaten to raise fuel costs and reroute flights.

Shares of AirAsia fell as much as 26 sen or 15% to close at RM1.42, its low-

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Paramount eyes higher sales, confident on margin resilience

BY CHELSEA J LIM & SYAFIQAH SALIM
theedgemaalaysia.com

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Paramount Corp Bhd (KL:PARAMON) is aiming for higher property sales this year and is confident that its margins will withstand cost pressures amid Middle East tensions.

The property developer is targeting RM1.2 billion sales this year and expects no delays to its planned launches worth RM1.1 billion in 2026, Paramount chief executive officer Jeffrey Chew said at an earnings briefing on Thursday. Paramount sold RM1.03 billion worth of properties in 2025.

“Our inputs are generally local,” he said. “There could be indirect cost escalation, but the direct impact on our business is not significant because our buyers are still Malaysians and they will still need homes.”

The bulk of the sales achieved last year were residential properties at 89%, while commercial properties only contributed 11%. Top sales were the transit-oriented development The Atera, located near the Asia Jaya LRT station in Petaling Jaya, and the luxury development The Ashwood in Kuala Lumpur.

Last year, Paramount launched five projects worth RM808 million in gross development value combined in Penang, Kedah and Selangor. The company has eight ongoing developments though three projects — Berkeley Uptown, Greenwoods



SHAHRIILL BASRI/THE EDGE

Salak Perdana and Sejati Residences — did not perform well in terms of take-up rate, registering less than 50%.

“We have already set up a task force from cross-functional teams to explore how we can turn things around and make it punch above our weight,” Chew added.

For the full year 2025, revenue at Paramount fell 9% to RM946.87 million though net profit was up by 16% to RM118.82 million thanks to gains from the disposal of its Anson Campus for RM75 million as well as share of profits from the newly acquired Envictus International Holdings Ltd.

No special dividend from asset monetisation

At the briefing, Chew said Paramount does not plan to declare a special dividend despite ongoing efforts to monetise its non-core assets, as the proceeds will be redeployed into higher-return projects.

The group currently holds about RM900 million worth of such assets, which

generate relatively low returns of about 1% ROE (return on equity), he said.

This includes two tertiary education campuses — University of Wollongong Malaysia Sdn Bhd and UOW Malaysia KDU Penang University College Sdn Bhd, as well as Mercure Kuala Lumpur Glenmarie hotel and Utropolis Marketplace mall.

“There was a question raised: once we finish monetising our assets, where will the profit go? We do not intend to use the proceeds from asset monetisation to pay back to shareholders. We want to reinvest it into property development, which can generate higher returns compared with the low ROE we are getting now,” he said.

The group’s ROE has been rising in recent years, reaching 8.3% for FY2025. Chew said the group is targeting 9% ROE this year.

“For FY2030, we are confident of reaching 10%, or even higher,” he added.



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KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Paramount Corp Bhd (KL:PARAMON) is open to considering other food-and-beverage franchises following its entry into the business last year, its chief executive officer (CEO) Jeffrey Chew said on Thursday.

Several franchise holders have approached Paramount about their businesses since the company bought a stake in the operator of Texas Chicken restaurants last year, Jeffrey Chew said at an earnings briefing. Paramount has yet to seriously consider any of the offers, he noted.

“However, it’s something we are open to, if there are opportunities and the valuation is attractive,” Chew said.

Paramount acquired the 28% stake in Envictus International Holdings Ltd

Paramount open to consider other food franchises, says CEO as offerors line up

BY SYAFIQAH SALIM & CHELSEA J LIM
theedgemaalaysia.com

from JAG Capital Holdings Sdn Bhd, the private investment vehicle of Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Johari Abdul Ghani, last year for about

RM126.32 million in cash.

Envictus currently operates 104 Texas Chicken restaurants and 50 San Francisco Coffee outlets in Malaysia. It plans to add at least another 15 Texas Chicken outlets by September this year.

Chew said Paramount currently has no plan to increase its stake in Envictus, although the option could be revisited in the longer term depending on market conditions.

“Maybe three to five years down the road, when things change and depending on the purchase price, we may take a look at it,” he said.

For the financial year ended Sept 30, 2025, Envictus recorded a profit after tax of RM30.2 million, which accounts for less than 10% of Paramount’s earnings.

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): British American Tobacco (Malaysia) Bhd (KL:BAT) announced on Thursday that its managing director Nedal Salem will be concluding his tenure on Aug 1 after leading the company for four and a half years.

Nedal, 56, will be succeeded by Daniel Hsu, current general manager of BAT Vietnam Cluster, according to a company statement.

“Nedal was instrumental in steering BAT Malaysia through a complex operating environment, which included Malaysia’s first excise hike in over a decade and the implementation of the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024 (Act 852).

“Under his stewardship, the group strengthened its commercial resilience, operational discipline and reinforced its combustible portfolio,” said BAT Malaysia.

The company said Hsu, 51, brings more than two decades of experience spanning general management, brand market-

BAT Malaysia MD Nedal Salem to step down on Aug 1, Daniel Hsu to take over

BY JUSTIN LIM
theedgemalaysia.com



Nedal Salem (left) and Daniel Hsu

ing, sales, mergers and acquisitions, and joint-venture leadership across multiple industries and markets.

Prior to this appointment, he served as Vietnam cluster general manager at BAT Vietnam, a role he has held since 2021. He previously held leadership roles including cluster general manager for Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau,

as well as general manager in Cambodia.

BAT Malaysia’s share price closed up 13 sen or 2.08% at RM6.38, giving the company a market capitalisation of RM1.82 billion.



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FGV CEO confirms resignation amid leadership transition

BY ASHLEY TANG
Reuters

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): The chief executive of Malaysian palm oil giant FGV Holdings, Datuk Fakhruddin Othman, has resigned from the company, he told *Reuters* on Thursday, confirming media reports.

“Yes, it is true,” Fakhruddin said in a brief text message.

Fakhruddin did not elaborate on the reasons for his departure, but it came six months after the firm, one of the world’s largest palm oil producers, was delisted by its majority shareholder, the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda), a state agency.

The government said last year that Felda was planning to restructure FGV and restore its original mission to prioritise the interests of small farmholders, known in Malaysia as Felda settlers.



Two company sources told *Reuters* that the management dynamics at the company shifted significantly after FGV was delisted, with its board taking a more hands-on role in day-to-day operations.

“I believe Fakhruddin was left with no choice due to the board’s interference in management. He left on principle, as he could no longer be effective in his role,” one of the sources said, adding that he had departed on Feb 27.

Contracts up for renewal for several members of the leadership team have not been extended, with the FGV board changing its priorities.

In the absence of a CEO, the board has assumed executive responsibilities for the company’s operations through a three-member committee, the sources said.

The listing of FGV in 2012 was one of the biggest IPOs in the world at the time, but the firm incurred record losses as the company grappled with financial and governance issues.

In 2020, accusations that FGV used forced labour on its plantations also led the United States to ban imports of the company’s products.

The ban was lifted in January, after the US Customs and Border Protection agency found that the company had taken sufficient action to address the allegations.

InNature seals deal to distribute Yves Rocher products in Singapore

BY IZZUL IKRAM
theedgemalaysia.com

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): InNature Bhd (KL:INNATURE), the operator of The Body Shop stores in Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and Cambodia, announced it has secured a deal to exclusively distribute products of French natural cosmetics and skin care brand Yves Rocher in Singapore.

A distribution agreement was inked between unit Hello Natural Singapore Pte Ltd and Laboratoires De Biologie Végétale Yves Rocher for the arrangement, according to a bourse filing on Thursday.

It will span five years, renewable for a further five years.

InNature secured a similar agreement for Yves Rocher products in Malaysia in November last year. That same month, the company also completed its acquisition of The Body Shop Singapore Pte Ltd for S\$2.96 million (RM9.49 million).



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KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Poh Huat Resources Holdings Bhd (KL:POHUAT) said a substantial shareholder has put forward a proposal for at least 50% of fees received by independent non-executive directors (INEDs) to be paid in the form of the company's shares purchased from the open market.

Pangolin Asia Fund, which holds a 6% stake in Poh Huat, submitted a requisition letter on Thursday to move a special resolution on this matter at the company's upcoming annual general meeting on April 15, according to a bourse filing from Poh Huat.

In its letter, Pangolin said that under its proposal, the shares purchased from the open market would be subject to a tenure lock-up, preventing their sale or transfer for as long as the director serves on the board.

As the shares are acquired from the open market, the approach avoids dilution of existing shareholders, it noted.

The fund argued that executive directors or representatives of major shareholders may inevitably make decisions influenced by their appointments, while INEDs are meant to safeguard minority shareholders' interests.

However, without meaningful share ownership, INEDs may lack sufficient vested interest to challenge decisions

Poh Huat shareholder proposes part-share pay for independent directors

BY JOHN LAI
theedgemalaysia.com

It noted that tying independent non-executive directors' wealth to long-term share performance would encourage them to think like owners, motivating them to challenge self-interested decisions and strengthening oversight.

that disproportionately benefit controlling shareholders or management.

"Currently, INEDs may lack sufficient vested interest in the company to challenge decisions that disproportionately benefit major shareholders or management," Pangolin said, adding that cognitive and social biases can lead to "herd" decision-making.

It noted that tying INEDs' wealth to long-term share performance would encourage them to think like owners, motivating them to challenge self-interested decisions and strengthening oversight.

Pangolin added that requiring INEDs to hold shares throughout their tenure, up to the recommended nine-year limit, would ensure alignment with minority shareholders, with holdings only allowed to be sold after resignation.

Poh Huat said its board will deliberate on the matter and announce its decision in due course after consultation with legal counsel.

Shares in Poh Huat closed unchanged at 85.5 sen on Thursday, valuing the company at RM237.95 million. Over the past one year, the stock has fallen 32.7%.



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KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Genetec Technology Bhd (KL:GENETEC) co-founder Aaron Chen Khai Voon has emerged as a substantial shareholder in Sunzen Group Bhd (KL:SUNZEN).

According to a bourse filing, Chen acquired 32.7 million shares, representing a 4.3% interest, via a direct business deal on March 4. Following the purchase, he now holds an 8.51% stake in Sunzen. This makes him the second largest shareholder of the company. Group managing director Teo Yek Ming is its largest shareholder with a direct 14.685% stake.

No price was disclosed in the filing. Based on the volume-weighted average price (VWAP) of 25.5 sen, the block is estimated to have cost RM8.34 million.

Sunzen, once focused on traditional animal health products, has shifted its core business to human health products and loan financing services. The group has remained profitable since FY2021, though with modest earnings.

For the first half ended Dec 31, 2025 (1HFY2026), Sunzen reported a net profit of RM7.54 million, a sharp increase from RM2.42 million a year earlier, while revenue was largely unchanged at RM49.92 million.

SUNZEN.COM.MY

Genetec co-founder Aaron Chen emerges as substantial shareholder in Sunzen

BY JOHN LAI
theedgemalaysia.com



The stronger performance was driven by its human health division, which swung to profit from a loss, and a 63% jump in loan financing profit, supported by higher interest income and bad debt recovery.

Genetec was a star performer in 2021, when its share price surged from below 40 sen to a high of RM3.82 (adjusted for bonus issue), gaining attention as a proxy to Tesla's prospects. Its shares closed unchanged at 15.5 sen a share on Thursday.

Chen exited as a substantial shareholder in May 2025 and, as of end-September, was no longer among Genetec's top 30 shareholders.

Currently, Chen is also a major shareholder of Seal Incorporated Bhd (KL:SEAL) with a 28.65% stake, TSA Group Bhd (KL:TSA) with 41.18%, and also holds a 10% stake in new ACE Market entrant PEOPLEology Bhd (KL:PEOPLE).

Shares in Sunzen closed unchanged at 25 sen on Thursday, valuing the company at RM205.45 million. Over the past year, the stock has declined 16.7%.



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Timberwell takeover offer by largest shareholder turns unconditional

BY IZZUL IKRAM
theedgemalaysia.com

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Timberwell Bhd (KL:TIMWELL) said the mandatory takeover offer by its largest shareholder, Wong Wai Foo, has turned unconditional after his collective shareholding — including parties acting in concert (PACs) — surpassed the 50% threshold.

Wong and his PACs now hold 54.95% in Timberwell, according to the timber product manufacturer's bourse filing on Thursday.

The 90 sen apiece takeover offer was triggered in January after Wong emerged as its single largest shareholder. The offer

remains open until 5pm on March 19.

Wong and his PACs held a 36.94% stake at the start of the takeover on Feb 26. They intend to retain Timberwell's listing status.

Wong's emergence in Timberwell coincided with the exit of three substantial shareholders: Tan Toeng Swie @ Lam Toeng Sui (who sold a 13.63% stake), non-executive director Agnes Soei-Tin Lamey (sold 6.78%) and Lam Soei Lim (sold 6.63%).

The Sabah-based Timberwell is also involved in timber harvesting and forest rehabilitation.

It has been loss-making for the last three consecutive years, from its financial year ended Dec 31, 2023 (FY2023) to FY2025. For FY2025, it booked a net loss of RM644,000 on revenue of RM14.34 million.

Shares in Timberwell ended half a sen or 0.56% lower at 89 sen on Thursday, valuing the company at RM79.26 million.



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KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Magma Group Bhd (KL:MAGMA) said on Thursday it plans to acquire the LUMA Hotel in Kota Kinabalu for RM60.9 million in a cash-and-shares deal, to expand its hotel portfolio.

In a filing with Bursa Malaysia, the group said its wholly-owned subsidiary, Magma Avenue Sdn Bhd, has entered into a heads of agreement to acquire the LUMA Hotel business and four contiguous buildings in the Sabah capital.

Under the agreement, Magma will acquire 100% equity in HH Home Hotel Sdn Bhd, which owns the LUMA Hotel and its brand, for RM12.8 million via a combination of cash and the issuance of 27.15 million new shares.

The group will also acquire four buildings from four different vendors where the LUMA Hotel currently operates. This includes two buildings — one from HKT Realty and another from Gamwon Properties — for RM16 million each, to be settled via a combination of cash and 14.55 million Magma shares per building.

The remaining two buildings will be acquired through the purchase of 100% equity in Zenith Everise Sdn Bhd from Alan Wong and Chin Chen Nyap for RM7.6 million, via cash and 16.36 million shares, and Upper Domain Sdn Bhd from Alan Wong and Lee Ka Yi for RM8.5 million, via cash and 19.09 million shares.

Magma to acquire LUMA Hotel in Kota Kinabalu for RM61 mil

BY CHOY NYEN YIAU
theedgemalaysia.com

All shares will be issued at 33 sen apiece, taking into account the five-day volume-weighted average price of Magma shares up to March 4.

Magma said the proposed acquisitions align with the group's strategy to expand and enhance its hotel portfolio. By investing in hospitality assets with strong growth potential, Magma also aims to strengthen recurring income from its core hotel business.

Magma currently manages the Impiana-branded hotels, develops properties and operates the Chagee tea chain in Malaysia.

At Thursday's close, Magma shares fell one sen or 3.1% to 31.5 sen, valuing the company at RM541.9 million.



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Food packaging machinery firm EPB plans transfer to Main Market

BY CHOY NYEN YIAU
theedgemalaysia.com

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): EPB Group Bhd (KL:EPB), which debuted on the ACE Market in August 2024, has proposed to transfer its listing to the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia.

In a bourse filing on Thursday, EPB said the move would enhance the company's credibility, while increasing recognition among investors, particularly institutional funds, in line with its growing scale of operations.

EPB is primarily engaged in designing, customising, fabricating, integrating and automating production lines for food manufacturing and processing companies.

The company is also involved in the trading of cellulose casings, as well as the manufacturing and trading of flexible packaging materials.

EPB made its debut on the ACE Market on Aug 23, 2024, with an initial public offering price of 56 sen. As at Feb 23 this year, EPB had an issued share capital of RM68.9 million.

According to the company, it has met the requirements for the proposed transfer as set out in the equity guidelines issued by Securities Commission Malaysia and the Main Market Listing Requirements of Bursa Securities.

EPB recorded an audited net profit of RM9.79 million for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2024 (FY2024). Cumulatively, the company achieved a net profit of RM36.33 million from FY2022 to FY2024.

As at Dec 31, 2024, EPB's current assets stood at RM118.35 million against current liabilities of RM27.56 million, translating into a current ratio of 4.29 times, according to the company's filing. The company also held cash and bank balances of RM42.7 million, along with RM29.44 million in fixed deposits with banks.

The transfer, which is subject to approval from the Securities Commission and Bursa Malaysia Securities, is expected to be completed in the third quarter of 2026.

At Thursday's close, EPB shares were unchanged at 34 sen, giving the company a market capitalisation of RM126.5 million.



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Read also: ACE Market-bound AMS Advanced Material inks underwriting agreement with M&A Securities

CGS: Middle East conflict risks stocks, but strong ringgit offers support

BY NAVINESHKUMAR SELVAKUMAR
theedgemalaysia.com

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Malaysian equities could face pressure in the second half of the year if the conflict in the Middle East escalates into a prolonged crisis that disrupts global oil supply, according to CGS International Securities.

The research house warned that severe disruptions to global oil movements could pose a significant threat to Malaysian corporate earnings and market valuations, particularly if energy prices remain elevated for an extended period. Only four companies under its coverage generate more than 5% of their revenue from the Middle East. Power Root Bhd (KL:PWROOT), Top Glove Corp Bhd (KL:TOPGLOV), Wasco Bhd (KL:WASCO) and HSS Engineers Bhd (KL:HSSEB).

In its note, the firm said although around 85% of the companies covered by CGS International are domestically focused, Malaysia would still feel the impact of sustained high energy prices and economic instability among its key trading partners.

Higher fuel costs could increase input expenses for businesses while weaker global growth could dampen demand, ultimately squeezing corporate profit margins.

The risks come as the global energy market reacts to escalating tensions in the Middle East as the conflict between the US and Israel against Iran enters its sixth day. It has already triggered surging oil prices, shipping disruptions, and rising inflation concerns. Traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical oil shipping routes, has also been severely disrupted.

Despite these risks, CGS International believes the current geopolitical tensions are unlikely to impact Malaysian equities in the near term.

A key reason for this resilience is the stronger ringgit, which has appreciated 4.2% year to date as of end-February 2026. The stronger currency is expected to help reduce imported costs for companies, providing margin support until at least the third quarter of 2026.

Despite the potential risks, CGS International remains positive on Malaysia's equity market outlook. The firm has maintained a 1,810-point end-2026 target for the FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI, among the highest for the benchmark index.

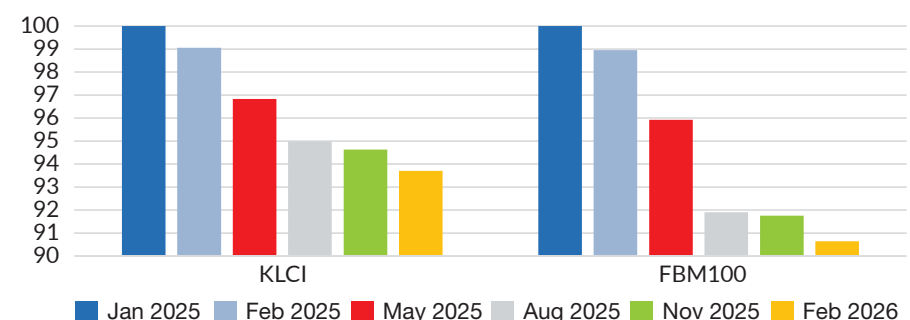
Companies under CGS International coverage with more than 5% of revenues from the Middle East

Company	Rating	TP (RM)	Share price (RM)	Revenue exposure to the middle east		
				5-10%	10-20%	20-50%
Power Root	Hold	1.34	1.16	X		
Top Glove	Add	0.67	0.55	X		
Wasco	Add	1.65	1.05		X	
HSS Engineers	Add	0.81	0.40			X

Source: CGS International



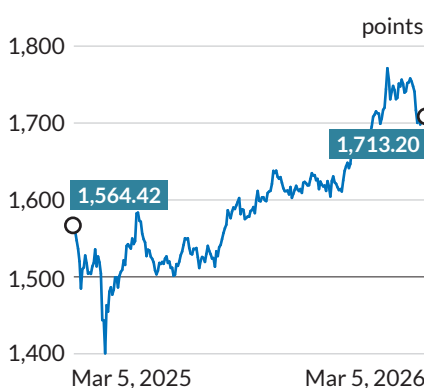
Bloomberg consensus 2026F estimates moved down 1.0% for the FBM KLCI and 1.2% for the FBM100 as end Feb 2026 vs Nov 2025



(Jan 2025 = 100) Sources: CGSI Research, Bloomberg, company reports



FBM KLCI



*As at market close on Mar 5, 2026
Source: Bloomberg



“We believe the healthy results season just passed has set a healthy fundamental foundation, with fund flows the remaining piece to drive valuations,” it said in its note.

Key themes supporting this outlook include policy certainty, robust crude palm oil prices, and structural shifts toward renewable energy and AI data centres.



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CIMB Securities highlights dividend appeals in telco sector, reaffirms TM as top pick

States to receive higher federal grants, full tourism tax revenue from 2026, says MOF

BY LUQMAN AMIN
theedgemaalaysia.com

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Federal grants to state governments are projected to reach RM10.5 billion in 2026, following a revised allocation framework endorsed by the National Finance Council on Thursday.

The Ministry of Finance said the increase is driven by a hike in the per capita grant (Pemberian Mengikut Bilangan Orang) rate, which is set to take effect this year. The move marks a steady climb in federal support, which has risen from RM8.1 billion in 2022 to RM10.3 billion in 2025.

Among key enhancements approved under the revised structure are:

- 100% tourism tax for states: In conjunction with Visit Malaysia Year 2026, the federal government will channel 100% of tourism tax collections back to the

respective states. The current practice shares only 50% of the proceeds.

- Concurrent List enhancements: The council agreed to improve the disbursement mechanism for the “Concurrent List” — areas where federal and state governments share responsibilities, such as public welfare and specific infrastructure. Funds will now be channeled earlier to strengthen state cash flow sustainability.
- Expanded road maintenance scope: The state road maintenance grant will now include the procurement of modular steel panel bridges (Bailey bridges), as well as the repair and upgrading of drains and culverts along state roads.

“These improvements in federal grants are important to accelerate socio-economic development and strengthen critical infrastructure so that we can progress together as one nation,” MOF said in a statement.

The National Finance Council is chaired by Prime Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who said the Madani government remains open to working closely with all state administrations, regardless of their political stance.

“This improvement in federal grants is essential to intensifying socio-economic development and critical infrastructure, so that we can all stand on equal footing [berdiri sama tinggi, duduk sama rendah] as one nation,” Anwar said.

KOTA KINABALU (March 5): Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor has denied claims that efforts were being made to create a “Borneo bloc”.

He said there is no such thing because Sabah and Sarawak remain part of Malaysia.

“We are one country, and there must be cooperation between all parties — the states and the federal government — to further strengthen our nation, Malaysia.

“In my view, there is no such thing as a Borneo bloc. Who is creating the Borneo bloc? There is none,” he told reporters after launching the Sabah Higher Education Student Contribution Assistance Initiative (Sentosa) programme at Dewan Rafflesia, Politeknik Kota Kinabalu, here on Thursday.

Hajiji said the narrative needs to be corrected as approaches that separate states through certain labels could confuse the public.

The media recently reported a political leader as saying that Sabah and Sarawak already wield strong political influence in Malaysia and are now seeking to further strengthen it through the proposed Borneo bloc.

BERNAMA

Hajiji denies Borneo bloc creation claim

Bernama



Malaysiakini lodges police report over RM3 mil fund diversion

BY JOHN LAI
theedgemaalaysia.com

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): The management firm of news portal *Malaysiakini*, Mkini Group Sdn Bhd, has filed a police report after finding that RM3 million from its subsidiaries was diverted to third-party entities suspected of running unlicensed investment schemes.

In a statement posted on its news website, the board said the diversions occurred between March 2023 and March 2024 and were facilitated by former key employees of *Malaysiakini*.

The irregularities went undetected as the company’s audited accounts for 2023 and 2024 had recorded the funds as fixed deposits with a licensed bank.

The internal probe was conducted with assistance from independent legal counsel and financial consultants. Following the findings, the board filed a police report and briefed *Malaysiakini*’s management and staff.

Co-founders Steven Gan and Premesh Chandran, both non-executive directors, expressed deep disappointment over the unauthorised actions.

Gan, *Malaysiakini*’s former editor-in-chief, said: “We are extremely devastated by these unauthorised actions.”

“To be betrayed by some of our most trusted staff members is a heavy blow. We are determined to recover the funds and tighten oversight to prevent any recurrence,” he said.

Former chief executive officer Premesh added that while the diversion had affected the company’s reserves, *Malaysiakini*’s core operations remain intact.

“The funds were built up by *Malaysiakini* over the last decade and formed a significant part of our reserves. Diverting these funds — perpetrated by former colleagues — severely damages our resilience, and distracts from our mission to speak truth to power,” he added.

The board said further updates will be provided as investigations and litigation progress.

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Tensions within Malaysia's opposition alliance, Perikatan Nasional, escalated on Thursday after its newly appointed chairman Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar issued a blunt public rebuke to former prime minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

Ahmad Samsuri, the Terengganu Menteri Besar popularly known as "Dr Sam," told reporters that the identity of the coalition's next prime ministerial candidate should not distract from preparations for the 16th General Election (GE16).

"What is certain is that TSMY is also no longer a candidate for prime minister," Samsuri said, referring to Muhyiddin by his initials.

The remark is a rare departure for the PAS vice-president, a soft-spoken technocrat who typically avoids public confrontation.

It follows Muhyiddin's earlier attempt to downplay Samsuri's elevation to the chairmanship, with the Bersatu president saying the role does not automatically make Samsuri the coalition's choice for PM.

Speaking at Bersatu headquarters on Tuesday, Muhyiddin claimed the nomination for the top job had yet to be formally discussed with PAS leaders. He maintained that the coalition had historically avoided naming a specific candidate prematurely.

PN chairman Samsuri hits back at Muhyiddin: 'He is also no longer a PM candidate'

BY LUQMAN AMIN
theedgemalaysia.com

The heated exchange highlights a shifting power dynamic within PN. On Feb 22, the PN supreme council broke with tradition by appointing Samsuri — who is not a party president — as the coalition's chairman. He replaced Muhyiddin, who resigned from the post on Dec 30, 2025.

The elevation of a PAS leader to the helm of PN has led many observers to view Samsuri as the "natural choice" for the premiership, given his administrative track record and PAS' dominance as the largest party in the opposition bloc.

Bersatu in turmoil

The leadership transition occurs as Bersatu grapples with deep internal fractures. A prolonged power struggle between Muhyiddin and his former deputy president Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin resulted in the expulsion of Hamzah and several key figures aligned with him earlier this year.

Despite his ouster from Bersatu, Hamzah remains the Parliament Opposition Leader for now, as the Dewan Rakyat Speaker has yet to receive a formal nomination for a replacement.

Local media reports have suggested that Hamzah and 13 other former Bersatu MPs may soon migrate to a new political vehicle. On Tuesday, Hamzah confirmed he is in active discussions to take over Parti Keluarga Malaysia (PKM), and that it's centred on "technical matters" now.

PKM founder, Khairi Jaya, separately told reporters that Hamzah is "90% confirmed" to take over the party, and that an internal election would be held after Hamzah joined the party to elect him as party president.

PN, which comprises PAS, Bersatu, Gerakan and the Malaysian Indian People's Party, currently stands as the primary challenger to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's administration.



Bersatu withdraws suit against Dewan Rakyat Speaker Johari Abdul over vacant seats

BY TIMOTHY ACHARIAM
theedgemalaysia.com

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) has withdrawn its lawsuit against Parliament Speaker Datuk Johari Abdul, for refusing to vacate five parliamentary seats held by its expelled members.

Bersatu's legal counsel, Chetan Jethwani, informed the court of this on Wednesday.

He told High Court judge Mahazan Mat Taib that this decision was prompted by the Federal Court's decision in Janu-

ary which quashed the party's appeal for a judicial review against Johari's decision.

"Given that decision, my client has no alternative but to withdraw this summons," the lawyer told Mahazan.

The judge then struck off the suit and ordered Bersatu to pay the five MPs, all named as defendants, a total of RM10,000 in costs.

Bersatu filed the suit in 2024 through its secretary Datuk Captain (Rtd) Muhammad Suhaimi Yahya and Bersatu whip

and vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee, who is also Beluran MP, and named Zahari Kechik (Jeli), Mohd Azizi Abu Naim (Gua Musang), Datuk Iskandar Dzulkarnain Abdul Khalid (Kuala Kangsar), Datuk Dr Zulkaferi Hanapi (Tanjong Karang) and Datuk Syed Abu Hussin Hafiz Syed Abdul Fasal (Bukit Gantang), along with Parliament Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul, as defendants.

Lawyers for the five MPs — Datuk Firoz Hussein Jamaluddin and Michael Anthony — had urged the court to award RM100,000, as they had done substantial ground work for the case.

However, Zulkefli Sulaiman, the federal counsel representing Johari, said that the government was not seeking any costs.

In this case, Bersatu was seeking a declaration that Johari, in a letter dated July 9, 2024, had acted in violation of Article 49A(3) of the Federal Constitution by erroneously ruling that no unexpected vacancies had occurred for the five parliamentary seats.

The plaintiffs had also requested for a declaration that Johari must comply with the provision by confirming that the unexpected vacancies have occurred and notifying the Election Commission of the same within 21 days of the court order.

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Former SRC International Sdn Bhd director Tan Sri Ismee Ismail told the High Court on Thursday that he had no knowledge of the RM42 million transfer from company-linked funds that allegedly flowed into the accounts of former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Testifying in the civil suit brought by SRC and its subsidiary, Gandingan Mentari Sdn Bhd, Ismee said he was unaware of a RM123 million transfer to Ihsan Perdana Sdn Bhd — the corporate social responsibility arm of SRC — from which RM42 million was subsequently moved to Najib.

Ismee emphasised his lack of involvement by highlighting the timeline of his departure from the company.

“I had absolutely no knowledge of the transfer,” he testified, noting that the transactions occurred months after he had stepped down from the board. Ismee resigned as a director on Aug 15, 2014, while the disputed transfers took place in December 2014 and February 2015. He said he only became aware of the transactions later during official investigations and court proceedings.

The RM4b KWAP loan

In his witness statement read out before High Court judge Raja Ahmad Mohzanuddin Shah Raja Mohzan, Ismee also distanced himself from the RM4 billion loan SRC obtained from the Retirement Fund (Incorporated) or KWAP.

The loan, disbursed in two tranches, was backed by a government guarantee signed by Najib, who was then serving as

Ismee denies knowledge of RM42 mil transfer to Najib’s accounts

BY TIMOTHY ACHARIAM & JUSTIN CHENG
theedgemalaysia.com



Tan Sri Ismee Ismail

both prime minister and finance minister.

“I was not involved in any matter relating to the application for the KWAP loan,” Ismee said, adding the loan application and approval processes had already taken place before he joined SRC’s board.

He testified that his knowledge of the loan only began once the matter was presented during board meetings. Management had informed the board that the funds were meant for strategic investments planned by the shareholder, including potential government-to-government ventures with companies linked to Abu Dhabi, he said.

“In my view, the defendant’s involvement was in providing the government guarantee required to obtain the KWAP loan,” he said.

In the suit filed in 2021, SRC and Gandingan Mentari are seeking a declaration that Najib is liable for the RM42 million.

The former prime minister is also being sued for breach of fiduciary duties, knowing receipt of the funds, dishonest assistance, tort of misfeasance and abuse of power.

While Najib is the primary defendant, the court permitted him to bring in six former directors as third-party defendants, alleging they share responsibility for SRC’s losses. They include Ismee, Datuk Suboh Md Yassin, Datuk Shahrol Azral Ibrahim Halmi, Datuk Mohammed Azhar Osman Khairuddin, Datuk Che Abdullah @ Rashidi Che Omar and Nik Faisal Ariff Kamil.

The trial continues on Friday, with Ismee set to be cross-examined by Najib’s counsel Muhammad Farhan Shafee.

SHAH ALAM (March 5): Former finance minister Lim Guan Eng has won his defamation suit against former Ampang member of Parliament Zuraida Kamaruddin and MNow Media Sdn Bhd, which operates the *MalaysiaNow* portal.

The suit centred on statements made by Zuraida during the Kuala Kubu Bharu by-election in 2024. Zuraida, a former housing and local government minister, had alleged that Lim — during his tenure as finance minister — had failed to approve the budget for a People’s Housing Project in Bestari Jaya consisting of over 200 units.

Lim had rubbished the claim as “patently untrue”, disparaging and libellous.

On Thursday, Judicial Commissioner Dr Shoba Rajah ruled that Zuraida failed to establish her legal defences and held that the statements published by the news portal were indeed defamatory.

Consequently, the court ordered Zuraida and MNow Media to jointly

Guan Eng wins defamation suit against Zuraida, awarded RM50,000

BY HAFIZ YATIM
theedgemalaysia.com

pay RM50,000 in total damages and RM5,000 in costs. An injunction was also granted to restrain the defendants from further publishing the defamatory statements.

The decision was confirmed by Lim’s lead counsel, Datuk N Sankara Nair. In a statement, he noted that lawyer Maniggandan Gopalan from Messrs SN Nair

& Partners also appeared for Lim, while Nizamuddin Abdul Hamid of Messrs Zharif Nizamuddin appeared for Zuraida and MNow Media.

Nizamuddin also confirmed the outcome of the case with *The Edge*.

Lim and his former political secretary Tony Pua had testified in the trial earlier this year against the defendants. The defence called Zuraida, former housing and local government director general Datuk N Jayaselan and MalaysiaNow editor Abdar Rahman Koya as witnesses.

In his 2024 filing, Lim alleged that Zuraida’s words painted him as racist and intent on disrupting racial harmony, dishonest and non-transparent in his official duties, as well as inhumane, suggesting he disregarded the welfare of Kuala Kubu Bharu residents.

The Bagan MP and Air Putih assemblyman maintained that the published allegations damaged his international reputation as a veteran politician of grit and integrity.

KUALA LUMPUR (March 5): Datuk Seri Bung Moktar Radin's widow, Datin Seri Zizie Izette Abdul Samad (*pic*), claims she was shocked that she was paid millions in 'fees' by mutual fund agents for introducing them to her husband.

Taking the stand in her graft trial, Zizie testified that it was not unusual for her friends to want to meet her husband due to his charisma and renown in the politics.

"There were too many who wished to meet him due to his charisma and who he was as a person," Zizie said, adding that she didn't second guess when Public Mutual agent Norhaili Ahmad Mokhtar asked for an introduction to her (now deceased) husband.

In this case, Zizie is facing three charges of abetting the late Bung Moktar, who at that material time was the non-executive chairman of Felcra and had been charged with accepting bribes of RM2.8 million from the agents through Zizie.

The prosecution claims that it was a gratification to obtain Felcra's approval to make a RM150 million investment in the Public Mutual unit trust.

Zizie says didn't ask for 'fee'

On Thursday, Zizie testified that Norhaili had told her that the monies were an "introductory fee". The former actress also resolutely denied any knowledge that the monies were kickbacks for the agents securing Felcra investments.

When asked by the prosecution on why someone would be paid a "fee" for a seemingly friendly introduction to a fami-



Bung Moktar's widow shocked by RM2.8 mil introductory fee, but didn't see it as untoward

BY TARANI PALANI
theedgemalaysia.com

ly member, Zizie retorted that the prosecution would have to ask the agent that themselves.

"You have to ask Norhaili. I never asked; she gave [me the money]," the 47-year-old mother-of-four replied.

When asked why she did not reject the "fee", Zizie answered that she had posed questions to the agent over the source of the fund and given it thought before accepting it.

"I questioned the source of the money. [Norhaili] said it was from commissions. After some thought, I did not see anything untoward [about it], so I accepted the monies," she said in court.

In her written witness statement, Zizie had said that Felcra had invested in Public Mutual unit trust products and that Norhaili, along with her colleague

Madhi Abdul Hamid, wanted to give her the money for introducing Felcra to them.

"I was shocked. I told her that I had done nothing. However, [Norhaili] stated that it was her agency's normal practice and marketing strategy to give introductory money as a token of appreciation for helping them with social networking," her witness statement read.

She also testified that she did not mention anything about the funds to her late husband.

In her statement, Zizie said that despite being married, she and Bung Moktar maintained their own financial affairs, without the other's interference. She added that she needed, and placed importance on financial independence, as she saw how her single-mother had suffered to provide for her family following Zizie's father's demise.

Zizie was charged in May 2019 with abetting Bung Moktar in accepting bribes of RM2.2 million and RM262,500 from Mahdi, and RM337,500 from Norhaili.

Bung Moktar and Zizie were called to enter their defence in September 2022. Following numerous postponements due to pending applications, the duo's defence finally began in September last year, with Bung Moktar taking the stand.

The prosecution, however, withdrew the charge against Bung Moktar following his death on Dec 5 last year. Bung Moktar had already completed his testimony in this case before his death.

Read also: Defence wraps up its case in graft trial linked to the late Bung Moktar

KOTA KINABALU (March 5): The Election Court here on Thursday affirmed the victory of Datuk Seri Dr Anil Sandhu as Kunak Assemblyman in the 17th Sabah State Election held in November last year.

The decision was delivered by judge Amelati Parnell when striking out the petition following preliminary objections by the respondents.

The court held that the election petition, filed by Md Bustan @ Industan Lumintang to nullify the victory of the Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate, failed to comply with the mandatory requirements under Rules 3(1) and 3(2) of the Election Petition Rules 1954.

Amelati, in her ruling, said the court agreed that compliance with these provisions is a fundamental requirement to invoke the jurisdiction of the Election Court.

She said the failure to properly present the petition and to plead sufficient material facts rendered the petition procedurally defective and legally unsustainable, and

Petition strike out, EC upholds Anil Sandhu's Kunak win

Bernama

therefore liable to be struck out at the preliminary stage without the need to proceed to a full trial.

Md Bustan filed the election petition alleging non-compliance with election laws regarding the discovery of several ballot papers, purportedly with the same serial number, at one of the voting channels in Kunak, further claiming that the matter raised doubts about the integrity of the voting process.

The court ordered the petitioner to pay costs of RM10,000 to the Election Commission, the Sabah State Election Officer and the Returning Officer, and RM20,000 to Anil.

With the striking out of the petition, the result of the election for the Kunak state seat remains as previously gazetted.

Meanwhile, Anil, when met by reporters, expressed his gratitude for the court's decision and stated that he can now focus fully on his responsibility to continue serving the people of Kunak without any doubt over the mandate given by the voters.

In the 17th Sabah State Election, Anil won a six-cornered fight with a majority of 2,118 votes, defeating incumbent Datuk Norazlinah Arif from Gabungan Rakyat Sabah, as well as candidates Kasman Karate (Perikatan Nasional), Roselih Lumayan (PIS), Ismu Isyam Arsad (PPRS) and Datuk Jasa @ Ismail Rauddah (Warisan).

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Bombing of Tehran intensifies as war enters day six

BY PARISA HAFEZI & STEVEN SCHEER

Reuters

DUBAI/JERUSALEM (March 5): The US-Israeli campaign against Iran entered its sixth day on Thursday with what residents described as even more intensive bombing, while Iran vowed to retaliate anywhere for a US attack on a ship thousands of miles from the battle zone.

Inside Iran, the abrupt postponement of a planned three days of mourning for slain Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei interrupted apparent plans to swiftly anoint Khamenei's hardliner son as his successor.

"Today is worse than yesterday. They are striking northern Tehran. We have nowhere to go. It is like a war zone. Help us," said Mohammadreza, 36, by phone from Tehran, with a shaky voice as explosions rang out from what Israel described as its latest wave of strikes on Iranian government targets.

Iran vows revenge after warship sunk

Although some international financial markets recovered from falls earlier in the week, the economic fallout of the campaign intensified, with countries around the world cut off from a fifth of global supplies of oil and liquefied natural gas.

Iran vowed to take revenge for a US torpedo attack on an Iranian warship off the coast of Sri Lanka, which killed more than 80 sailors thousands of miles from the battle zone. Iran's foreign minister said the ship had been struck without warning in international waters, and Washington would "bitterly regret" the precedent it had set.

The body of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the first hours of the US-Israeli air campaign in the first assassination of a country's top ruler by an airstrike, had been due to lie in state in a Tehran prayer hall from Wednesday evening to launch three days of mourning.

But the memorial, expected to draw many thousands of mourners to the streets, was abruptly and indefinitely postponed shortly before it was due to begin.

In the hours before announcing the delay, Iranian officials had said they were close to naming Khamenei's successor, and that the leading candidate was his son Mojtaba, a powerful hardliner whose selection would be a strong gesture of defiance.

Iranian officials gave no reason for the postponement of the memorial, but a



Smoke rises following an explosion, amid the US-Israeli conflict with Iran, in Tehran March 5, 2026.

source told *Reuters* it was motivated in part by fear of assassination of those attending the event while Israeli and US warplanes remain in the skies.

Another source said that it would be logical to wait to announce the new supreme leader until after the elder Khamenei was buried, although given the wartime conditions it was possible a successor could still be named before the memorial.

Memorial ceremonies of Shi'ite political and religious leaders, especially those seen as martyrs, are known for mass public displays of passion.

Announcing the younger Khamenei as successor during a mourning period would allow him to take power while his father's followers were on the streets, rallying support and making it more difficult for any opponents to mount a challenge.

Israel has said it would consider any replacement for Khamenei who continued hostile policies an immediate target to be killed.

Iranian TV hacked

Israel has said its aim in the war is to overthrow Iran's clerical rulers. Washington says its goal is to prevent Tehran from being able to project force beyond its borders, but it has also called on Iranians to rise up and seize power.

Many Iranians openly celebrated the death of the supreme leader, whose security forces had killed thousands of anti-government protesters just weeks ago in the worst domestic unrest since the era of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

State television was hacked on Thursday, airing a video of Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's last shah who has emerged as a significant opposition figure.

"A heavy burden of destiny rests upon the shoulders of us all. And we, together, will walk this path until final victory. Long live Iran," he said.

A 25-year-old woman in Tehran who asked that her name not be used for security reasons said those opposed to the government were not yet able to take to the streets while the country was under attack, but had made their feelings clear by posting online videos of their celebrations at Khamenei's death.

"If Mojtaba takes over, he will be killed as well, so we are not concerned about it," she said.

Air raid sirens in Israel sent Israelis to shelters. Military spokesman Effie Defrin said there had been a decrease in the number of daily missile launches from Iran, although "the threat still exists".

"The more we intensify the damage and eliminate the launchers, the more the threat will diminish over time," he said.

REUTERS

More tankers come under attack as US-Iran conflict spreads in the region

BY JONATHAN SAUL &
ANNA HIRTENSTEIN
Reuters

(March 5): More tankers came under attack in Gulf waters on Thursday as the US-Iran war escalated, and Iranian drones entered Azerbaijan, threatening to spread the crisis to more oil producers in the region.

A Bahamas-flagged crude oil tanker was targeted by an Iranian remote-controlled boat laden with explosives while anchored near Iraq's Khor al Zubair port, according to initial assessments. A second tanker at anchor off Kuwait was taking on water and spilling oil after a large explosion on its port side.

Nine vessels have come under attack since the conflict broke out between the US, Israel and Iran on Saturday. Iran launched a wave of missiles at Israel early on Thursday and also sent drones into Azerbaijan, injuring four people.

The escalation comes after a motion to halt the US attacks was blocked in Washington and as the son of Iran's slain supreme leader emerged as a frontrunner to succeed him, suggesting Tehran was not about to buckle under the pressure.

Around 200 ships, including oil and liquefied natural gas tankers as well as cargo ships, remained at anchor in open waters off the coast of major Gulf producers, according to *Reuters* estimates based on ship-tracking data from the MarineTraffic platform.

Hundreds of other vessels remained outside the Strait of Hormuz unable to reach ports, shipping data showed. The waterway is a key artery for around a fifth of the world's oil and LNG supply.

BP evacuated foreign staff from Iraq's Rumaila oil field after two unidentified drones landed inside the field, according to Iraqi oil sources. Baghdad has cut its oil production by nearly 1.5 million barrels a day as the country ran out of storage and was unable to load tankers, officials told *Reuters*.



Photo of Iranian warship IRIS Dena being torpedoed by a US submarine released by the Pentagon.

Sri Lanka says it is trying to safeguard lives on second Iranian ship after US sinks frigate

BY UDITHA JAYASINGHE
Reuters

GALLE, Sri Lanka (March 5): Sri Lanka said it was trying to "safeguard lives" on a second Iranian ship off its coast on Thursday, a day after 87 people were killed in a US submarine strike on an Iranian warship in the same region.

Sri Lanka's cabinet spokesman told parliament that various authorities were responding to the presence of an Iranian ship in Sri Lanka's exclusive economic zone outside its maritime boundary near the port of Colombo.

"The President, defence officials, and all other relevant officials are aware and we are addressing the situation," spokesman Nalinda Jayatissa said in response to questions from an opposition leader.

"We are doing our utmost to safeguard lives," he said, without saying how, or whether the ship was a military vessel.

Jayatissa said the *IRIS Dena* was sunk on Wednesday 19 nautical miles off Sri Lanka's southern port city of Galle and that two freezers had been dispatched from Colombo to store the 87 bodies recovered from the sea.

Iran hints at future retaliation for attack

Tehran has asked Colombo to help repatriate the bodies, Sri Lanka's deputy minister for health and mass media, Hansaka Wijemuni, told *Reuters*, adding that a timeframe had not yet been determined.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the warship was struck in international waters without warning thousands of miles from the Gulf, where US and Israeli forces are striking Iran and Tehran is retaliating with missile and drone attacks.

"The US will bitterly regret the precedent it has set," Araghchi said in a post on X, adding that the warship was a guest of India's navy and was carrying almost 130 sailors.

Sri Lankan military rescuers responded to an early-morning distress call from the *IRIS Dena* on Wednesday and found 32 survivors. Authorities said they would be released from hospital on Thursday after being treated for minor injuries.

Search and rescue operations for an estimated 10 people who remain unaccounted for would continue, they said.

Two policemen guarded the entrance to ward No 58 of the hospital as nurses milled about and doctors conducted morning rounds.

The attack dramatically widens the scope of the war.

"An American submarine sank an Iranian warship that thought it was safe in international waters," US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said at the Pentagon. "Instead, it was sunk by a torpedo. Quiet death."



BLOOMBERG

Asia's deepening oil crunch triggers fuel hoarding, price hikes

BY NICHOLAS LUA, WEILUN SOON & SERENE CHEONG
Bloomberg

(March 5): A deepening energy crunch across Asia is impacting all corners of the oil market, with suppliers of everything from shipping fuel to cooking gas beginning to cut back on sales in order to manage shrinking stockpiles.

A widening conflict in the Persian Gulf, which began at the weekend after US and Israeli strikes on Iran, has upended the energy trade by all but halting traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway that connects some of the world's most important energy producers to their consuming markets.

The impact has been swift, even for wealthy markets with extensive storage. Shipping fuel suppliers in Singapore, the world's top bunkering port, have informed customers that they will fulfill only part of agreed orders, citing lower volumes received from their own suppliers, according to people with knowledge of the matter. They asked not to be identified as the discussions are not public.

China has told its largest refiners to suspend exports of diesel and gasoline,

asking them to refrain from signing new contracts and to cancel already-agreed shipments. The world's top oil importer is only Asia's third fuel exporter, but the move reflects a race across the region to make domestic demand a priority.

In South Korea, petrochemical producer Yeochun NCC declared force majeure on some of its sales due to disruptions in the arrival of naphtha feedstock.

Governments, meanwhile, are grappling with dwindling supplies of liquefied petroleum gas used in cooking, given disrupted deliveries from the Middle East, a key source of fuel for Asia. India, one of the most affected markets, is in talks with producers. Still, with US cargoes too distant, there are few alternatives to replace lost volumes, meaning some countries could be forced to impose a form of rationing.

Others are already considering tapping official stockpiles. In Japan, which gets 90% of its crude from the Middle East, oil refiners are asking the government to release crude from the nation's strategic petroleum reserves.

Another concern for many economies and consumers in Asia is simply cost, as the scramble for cargoes has bid up everything from jet fuel to marine gasoil and sent prices to eye-watching levels. A methodology adjustment in the physical oil-pricing mechanism run by Platts, a unit of S&P Global Energy, has further underscored a surge that will hurt importing nations and consumers.

Faced with these painfully high oil and fuel prices, Bangladesh is already preparing to reduce deliveries to petrol pumps and — among other measures — has asked citizens to avoid unnecessary private trips.

China urges refiners to suspend fuel exports amid Mideast war — Reuters

BY TRIXIE YAP, SIYI LIU & CHEN AIZHU
Reuters

SINGAPORE (March 5): China has asked refiners to halt signing new contracts to export fuel and to try to cancel shipments already committed as tight oil supply due to the Iran war curbs refinery output, several people with knowledge of the matter said on Thursday.

The guidance does not apply to jet fuel refuelling for international flights, bonded bunkering or supplies to Hong Kong or Macau, the industry and trade sources said.

China's National Development and Reform Commission did not respond to a request for comment.

Lower exports from China, one of Asia's biggest fuel exporters, are likely to further tighten fuel supply in Asia, pushing refining margins even higher, as the impact from the war in the Middle East reverberates across the top oil importing region.

Diesel processing margins hovered at three-year highs near US\$49 a barrel on Thursday, LSEG pricing data showed, while jet fuel cracks were more than US\$55 a barrel.



BLOOMBERG

WORLD

(March 5): International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the war in the Middle East will test global economic resilience and warned that “new shocks in different shapes and sizes” will keep coming.

Underscoring the IMF’s concern at the suffering and loss of life resulting from the Middle East crisis, Georgieva warned that a prolonged conflict could affect energy prices, market sentiment, economic growth and inflation, “placing new demands on the shoulders of policymakers everywhere”.

“We are in a world of more frequent, more unexpected shocks,” Georgieva said at the Asia in 2050 Conference in Bangkok. “Most of the time, we cannot predict what exactly they will be. But all of the time, we can strive to be ready for them.”

Iran’s retaliation to the US-Israel strikes has already disrupted travel and the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz, and *Bloomberg Economics* scenarios show that elevated energy prices could spur infla-

IMF says Mideast war to test world economy, expecting new shocks

BY CLAIRE JIAO &
PATPICHA TANAKASEMPIPAT
Bloomberg



tion and damage global growth. That’s on top of tariff turmoil, which Georgieva last month warned could undercut an otherwise “buoyant” US economy.

The IMF is closely monitoring the Middle East conflict, and will incorporate its findings in the World Economic Outlook that will be published in April, Georgieva said.

As recently as January, the IMF revised its global growth projections slightly higher to 3.3% for 2026 and 3.2% for next year.

The IMF chief had praise for Asia for rebuilding institutions, external buffers and investor credibility after the financial crisis in 1997-1998. But Georgieva cautioned that the region still needed to brace for a world of “repetitive shocks” that include disruptive technology, trade and geopolitics.

She urged Asia to link up more internally to shield itself from trade uncertainties that will likely continue. The region can accelerate integration by lowering non-tariff barriers.

SEOUL (March 5): The US-Israel war with Iran could disrupt supplies of key semiconductor manufacturing materials, a South Korean ruling party lawmaker said on Thursday, as the conflict in the Middle East entered its sixth day.

South Korea’s chip industry, which supplies around two-thirds of global memory chips, is also concerned that a prolonged conflict in Iran will lead to higher energy costs and prices, Kim Young-bae said after meeting with executives from companies such as Samsung Electronics and trade groups.

“Officials raised a possibility that semiconductor production could be disrupted if some of these key materials cannot be sourced from the Middle East,” he said at a briefing with reporters, giving helium as one example.

Helium is essential for heat management during semiconductor production and it has no viable alternatives currently. It is only produced in a handful of countries, with Qatar among the leading players in the industry.

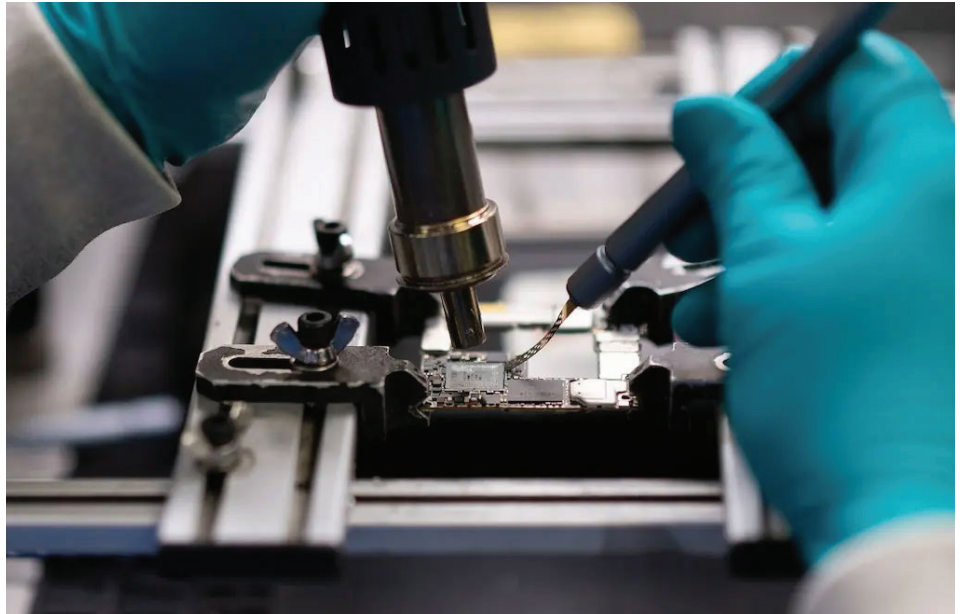
The warnings come as chipmakers grapple with severe supply bottlenecks due to surging chip demand from AI data centre operators that has tightened supplies to many other industries, including smartphones, laptops and automobiles.

South Korean chipmaker SK Hynix said in a statement it has “long secured diverse supply chains and sufficient inventory” of helium, “therefore there is almost no chance that the company will be affected.”

Iran crisis could disrupt supply of key chipmaking materials, South Korea warns

BY HEEJIN KIM & HYUNJOO JIN
Reuters

BLOOMBERG



Samsung declined to comment.

Taiwan’s TSMC said in a statement that it did not anticipate any significant impact currently, and will continue monitoring the situation closely.

Contract chipmaker GlobalFoundries said it is “in direct contact with suppliers, customers and partners in the region”, and “mitigation plans” are in place.

South Korea’s industry ministry said the country relies heavily on the Middle East for 14 other items in chip supply chains, including bromine and chip inspection equipment, but that many of them can be sourced domestically or from other markets.



REUTERS

Chinese President Xi Jinping (left) and Chinese Premier Li Qiang look on during the opening session of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People, in Beijing, China on Thursday, March 5, 2026.

China ramps up 'high stakes' tech race with US as economic imbalances deepen

BY MEI MEI CHU & JING XU
Reuters

BEIJING (March 5): China on Thursday set out a five-year roadmap to turbocharge scientific breakthroughs and embed AI across its industrial economic machine, framing technological dominance as a core national security goal in its sharpening rivalry with the US.

In its 15th strategic plan since adopting Soviet-style quinquennial policy cycles in the 1950s, Beijing has outlined a bet that technology — not consumption — will drive its next phase of development despite growing structural pressures.

The objectives reflect President Xi Jinping's vision of developing "new productive forces" to escape the middle-income trap, counter the demographic downturn, and enhance self-sufficiency to insulate China from US export controls.

At the opening of the annual parliament meeting, Premier Li Qiang praised China's ability to withstand US President Donald Trump's tariff hikes, but said "multilateralism and free trade are under severe threat," announcing 7% increases in the defence budget, as well as in research and development.

Li acknowledged an "acute" imbalance between strong supply and weak demand and risks from a worsening property sector crisis and high local government debt.

These challenges have pushed Beijing to set a slightly lower growth target of 4.5%-5% for 2026, down from last year's 5%, which was met largely through a one-fifth surge in its trade surplus to a record US\$1.2 trillion (RM4.7 trillion).

As widely expected, the five-year plan also pledged a "notable" increase in household consumption, without specifying figures, dampening expectations for demand-side reforms.

Last year's trade punches with the Trump administration, which briefly escalated to embargo-like conditions of triple-digit tariffs, showed the importance of its supply chain dominance as leverage.

China vowed to maintain its competitive edge in rare earths.

The US and its allies are still years away from breaking their reliance on China for these materials vital to everything from AI chips to defence systems.

"China's government remains laser-focused on spurring technological breakthroughs and high-tech investment," said Fred Neumann, chief Asia economist at HSBC. "In part, this is motivated by competition with the United States for control over the technologies of the future."

"Many international observers may be left disappointed, therefore, by slower progress in rebalancing the economy away from investment towards consumption."

China invests 20 percentage points of GDP more than the global average, while its households spend roughly 20 points less — a state-controlled, debt-driven development model that analysts say creates industrial overcapacity and fuels trade tensions abroad and deflationary pressures at home.

China to inject US\$44 bil into state banks, boost tech financing

BY ZIYI TANG & SELENA LI
Reuters

BEIJING/HONG KONG (March 5): China said on Thursday that it would inject 300 billion yuan (US\$44 billion) into state-owned banks this year to guard against systemic risks, and boost financing for technology companies amid intensifying US rivalry.

The measures were outlined in the annual government work report released at the opening session of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's rubber-stamp parliament.

The report said Beijing would further replenish the capital at financial institutions and prudently dispose of non-performing assets in the sector.

Analysts expect Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, and Agricultural Bank of China to be the recipients of the capital injection after four other state-owned banks received funds last year.

The recapitalisation comes as the world's second-largest economy grapples with a prolonged property crisis, weak consumer confidence and deflationary pressure. Banks have seen an increase in bad loans tied to struggling developers and cash-strapped local governments.

This follows a roughly US\$72 billion recapitalisation last year aimed at boosting big state banks' core capital as they face lower profit margins and asset-quality strains.

Beijing also plans to regulate competition among financial institutions and promote consolidation among small- and medium-sized local financial institutions, the report shows.

The government announced an additional 100 billion yuan fiscal-financial coordination fund to boost domestic demand through measures such as loan interest subsidies, financing guarantee, and risk compensation.

Beijing also pledged to continue tackling "risks arising from real estate, local government debt and small and medium local financial institutions".

China boosts defence spending 7% in drive to modernise by 2035

BY GREG TORODE & BEN BLANCHARD
Reuters

HONG KONG/TAIPEI (March 5): China will boost defence spending by 7% in 2026, it said on Thursday, the lowest rate in five years but still outpacing wider economic growth targets and the rest of Asia at a time of growing regional tension, including over Taiwan.

Security analysts and regional military attaches are watching China's budget closely as it scrambles to modernise the military by 2035, while stepping up deployments across East Asia and purging the top brass to tackle graft.

China will improve combat readiness and accelerate the development of "advanced combat capabilities", Premier Li Qiang said at the opening of parliament's annual meeting, at which he unveiled a broader GDP growth forecast of 4.5% to 5%.

"All these steps will boost our strategic capacity to safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests," Li said in his work report, adding that President Xi Jinping held ultimate command responsibility.

The figure of 7%, which follows three years of annual rises of 7.2% and is the lowest since 6.8% in 2021, is part of a spending campaign in which China's military has developed new advanced missiles, ships, submarines and surveillance methods.

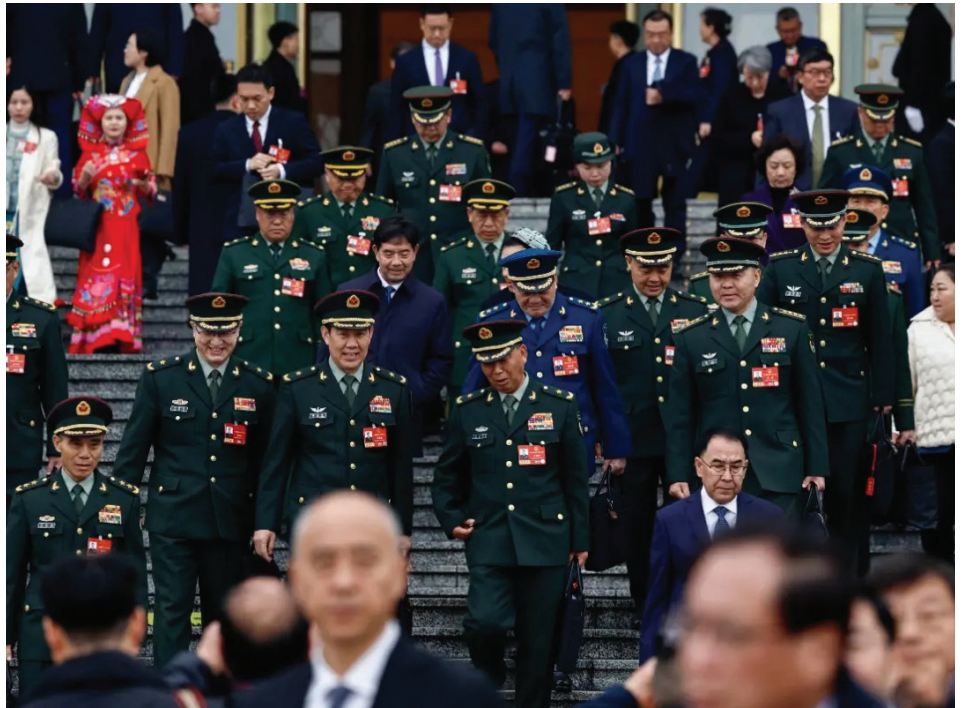
This year's increase showed Beijing was keeping to a long-held principle of balancing economic growth with national defence goals, said James Char of the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

"Essentially, the People's Liberation Army budget has been growing at a fairly consistent rate as a percentage of GDP ... roughly the rate of GDP growth plus inflation," added Char, a China defence scholar.

It comes amid the highest-profile purge of upper military ranks in decades, with the two most senior generals ensnared in disciplinary investigations.

Zhang Youxia, a veteran military ally of Xi, was placed under investigation in January, while another, He Weidong, was expelled in October last year.

The purge leaves just two members of the usual seven on the supreme Central



REUTERS

Military Commission, Xi himself as its chair, and a newly promoted vice chairman, Zhang Shengmin.

The corruption crackdown showed "Beijing will keep a tighter watch on military spending," said Wen-Ti Sung, a security analyst based in Taiwan, although it was clear all levels of government were getting more frugal.

The government remains committed to the ruling Communist Party's "absolute leadership over the armed forces", Li added.

"Guided by the principle of ensuring political loyalty in the military, we will continue to improve military political conduct and make major strides towards the centenary goals of the People's Liberation Army."

Some regional analysts believe the founding anniversary, which falls next year will bring further increases in military drills and deployments around Taiwan, the democratically-governed island that Beijing views as its territory.

'Reunification' with Taiwan

China would "resolutely fight against separatist forces aimed at 'Taiwan independence' and oppose external interference", Li vowed, virtually reprising comments of last year.

That would "promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations and

advance the cause of national reunification", he added.

Taiwan says only the island's people can decide their future. Its government said it did not see any major policy changes towards Taiwan in Li's comments, but was concerned about China's defence spending.

"Even under conditions of an unstable economy and weak private consumption, they are still willing to allocate a very large budget to military spending," said Liang Wen-chieh, a spokesperson of the Mainland Affairs Council in Taipei.

"And of course, that poses a threat to Taiwan," the spokesperson told reporters.

International environment

Li toned down a warning about the international environment from a year ago, calling it "complex and challenging" rather than "increasingly complex and severe" in comments that had cited "changes unseen in a century".

In Tokyo, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said China was not sufficiently transparent about its continued high level of defence spending and stronger capabilities.

Despite China's efforts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas by "force or coercion", Japan would keep up efforts to build constructive, stable ties with it, Kihara told a press briefing.

US productivity tops forecast in 4Q as firms seek to contain costs

BY AUGUSTA SARAIVA
Bloomberg

(March 5): US labour productivity rose in the fourth quarter (4Q) by more than forecast, adding to evidence that companies are striving for greater efficiency to contain costs.

Productivity, or non-farm employee output per hour, increased at a 2.8% annualised rate after an upwardly revised 5.2% advance in the third quarter, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) showed on Thursday. The median projection of economists surveyed by *Bloomberg* called for a 1.9% advance.

The recent trend in efficiency has helped ensure wage pressures remain contained, corroborating views of Federal Reserve officials that the labor market is no longer a source of inflation.

Labour costs are the biggest expense for many businesses, so companies turn to new technology and equipment to improve worker efficiency. Business spending on technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) has allowed some firms to get



A worker assembles components on a diesel engine at an engine plant in Seymour, Indiana. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed on Thursday that productivity, or non-farm employee output per hour, increased at a 2.8% annualised rate after an upwardly revised 5.2% advance in the third quarter.

by with leaner staffing, which contributed to tepid hiring last year.

Unit labour costs — what businesses pay employees to produce one unit of output — also rose 2.8% in 4Q.

While economic growth slowed at the end of last year, that largely reflected the impact of the longest-ever US government shutdown. Federal government spending declined by the most since 1972. However, business investment continued to rise at a solid pace.

For all of last year, productivity increased 2.2%, while labour costs rose 1.9% in 2025, the BLS report showed.

Economists generally expect efficiency gains to continue this year amid the steady rush of investment in AI. Moreover, capital investment incentives in President Donald Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act could encourage additional investment going forward.

The productivity report showed 4Q non-farm business output climbed an annualised 2.6%. Hours worked fell 0.2%, while hourly compensation, unadjusted for inflation, increased 5.7%. After adjusting for inflation, worker compensation rose at the fastest pace in more than a year.

WASHINGTON (March 5): The number of Americans filing new applications for unemployment benefits was unchanged last week while layoffs dropped sharply in February, consistent with stable labor market conditions.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits were flat at a seasonally adjusted 213,000 for the week ended February 28, the Labor Department said on Thursday. Economists polled by *Reuters* had forecast 215,000 claims for the latest week.

The labour market is regaining its footing after stumbling last year amid what economists said was uncertainty stemming from President Donald Trump's broad tariffs, which he pursued under a law meant for use in national emergencies.

The import duties have since been struck down by the US Supreme Court. Trump responded to the ruling by imposing a 10% global tariff and later announced it would rise to 15%.

The Federal Reserve's Beige Book report on Wednesday described employment levels as "generally stable in recent weeks as seven

US weekly jobless claims unchanged; layoffs decline 55% in February

Reuters



of the twelve districts reported no change in hiring." The report noted that "contacts in several districts cited rising nonlabor input costs, softer demand, or uncertainty about overall economic conditions as reasons for flat or lower employment levels."

Economists are optimistic that the labor market will regain momentum this year as tax cuts stimulate demand.

A separate report on Thursday from global outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas showed US-based employers announced 48,307 job cuts in February, down 55% from January and 72% from a year ago. Hiring plans soared 140% from January, but they were down 63% compared to last February.

Tepid hiring means some people who lose their jobs are experiencing long bouts of unemployment.

The number of people receiving unemployment benefits after an initial week of aid, a proxy for hiring, increased 46,000 to a seasonally adjusted 1.868 million during the week ended February 21, the claims report showed.

Broadcom CEO sees AI chip sales topping US\$100 bil in 2027

BY DINA BASS
Bloomberg

(March 5): Broadcom Inc chief executive officer Hock Tan said the company expects its artificial intelligence (AI) chip sales to top US\$100 billion (RM394.06 billion) next year, marking major inroads into territory dominated by Nvidia Corp.

“We have line of sight” to reach this milestone in 2027, he said during a conference call with analysts on Wednesday. “We have also secured the supply chain required to achieve this.”

The company projects that AI chip revenue will be US\$10.7 billion in the current quarter, so reaching an annual pace of US\$100 billion would be a major jump. Broadcom reported US\$20 billion in AI sales in 2025.

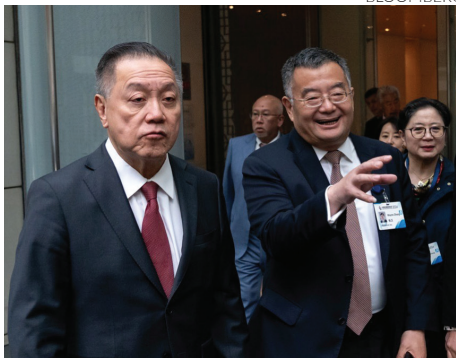
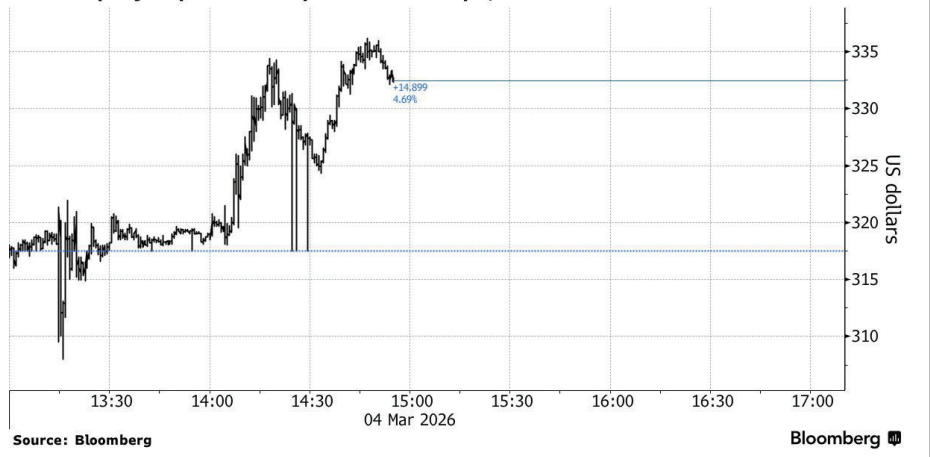
Broadcom shares gained about 6.8% in early trading on Thursday before markets opened in New York.

Tan has increasingly hitched Broadcom’s fortunes to AI. Though Nvidia remains the biggest maker of accelerators — the chips that help train and run AI models — Broadcom has positioned itself as an alternative with its custom-made semiconductors. The company’s AI chip targets include both accelerators and networking semiconductors.

Broadcom also delivered a better-than-estimated quarterly outlook on Wednesday and announced a stock buyback plan worth as much as US\$10 billion.

Revenue will be about US\$22 billion in the fiscal second quarter, which ends May

Broadcom Shares Climb on AI Growth Forecast The company expects AI chip revenue to top \$100 billion in 2027



Broadcom Inc CEO Hock Tan (left) expects AI to bolster sales growth.

3, the company said. Analysts had predicted US\$20.5 billion on average, though some projections topped US\$22 billion, according to data compiled by *Bloomberg*.

The company had faced scepticism about its AI prospects this year, with Broadcom shares falling 8.3% through the close.

Investors have grown more concerned about a bubble in AI spending, and even a blockbuster earnings report from Nvidia last month led to a stock selloff. One key question is whether the current AI wave will extend beyond the next few years.

Broadcom had seen its valuation surge in recent years, helped by deals to make custom AI chips for companies like OpenAI and Anthropic PBC.

Its prospects have also benefitted from increased interest in Google’s TPU, or tensor processing unit, a chip that Broadcom helps develop for the search giant. And Broadcom just shipped the first units of a new generation of processors that it said will be adopted by about a half-dozen more clients this year.

In the fiscal first quarter (1Q), which ended Feb 1, sales rose to US\$19.3 billion. Profit was US\$2.05 a share, excluding some items. Analysts had projected revenue of US\$19.3 billion and earnings of US\$2.03 per share.

AI revenue more than doubled to US\$8.4 billion in the period, Broadcom said, a faster clip than it anticipated. The increase was “driven by robust demand for custom AI accelerators and AI networking,” Tan said in a statement.

Even if Broadcom hits its targets, Nvidia will still dwarf the company in AI revenue. Nvidia is expected to generate US\$333 billion in fiscal 2027 from AI data centre customers.

BENGALURU (March 5): Nvidia has stopped production of its second-most advanced artificial intelligence (AI) chips, known as H200 chips, intended for the Chinese market, the *Financial Times* reported on Thursday.

The US chipmaker has reallocated manufacturing capacity at chip contract maker TSMC away from making H200 chips to its next-generation Vera Rubin hardware, the report said, citing two people with knowledge of the matter.

Reuters could not immediately verify the report. Nvidia and TSMC did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Nvidia halts China-bound H200 output, shifts TSMC capacity to Vera Rubin, FT reports

BY SHIVANI TANNA
Reuters

Last week, Nvidia said it had received licences from the US government to ship “small amounts” of its H200 chips to customers in China. However, this move suggests Nvidia does not expect any meaningful H200 sales in China in the near term.

A US Commerce Department official said last month that none of Nvidia’s H200 chips had been sold to Chinese customers.

In January, US President Donald Trump’s administration gave a formal green light to China-bound sales of Nvidia’s H200 chips, but shipments remained stalled due to guardrails built into the process.

WORLD

China's JD.com misses quarterly revenue estimates

BY DEBORAH SOPHIA
Reuters

(March 5): China's JD.com missed market estimates for quarterly revenue on Thursday, in a sign that stiff competition and waning benefits from government subsidies were eating into demand at the e-commerce giant.

Consumer demand in China has taken a hit in the past several years, with a lingering property sector crisis, concerns over employment and geopolitical tensions ham-

pering growth in the world's second-largest economy.

That has hurt retailers like JD.com — the largest seller of home appliances in China — as shoppers cut back on discretionary purchases. While JD.com has benefitted over a few quarters from government subsidy measures, the incremental benefit is tapering off as year-over-year comparisons become tougher.

But the company has leaned on other product categories and new revenue streams such as its instant retail business and advertising unit to drum up sales.

"Our revenue mix has become increasingly diversified, and as profitability strengthens... and higher-margin businesses such as advertising contribute a larger share, we are confident that our profit streams will become more diversified as well," JD.com CFO Ian Su Shan said in a statement.

"Despite some short-term fluctuations in the fourth quarter, our financial position remains solid," he added.



Berkshire Hathaway resumes stock buybacks, CEO Abel says they help create value

Reuters

(March 5): Berkshire Hathaway said on Thursday it has begun repurchasing its own shares after a nearly two-year hiatus, as Greg Abel begins putting his stamp on the conglomerate after succeeding Warren Buffett as chief executive in January.

The repurchases began on Wednesday and are Berkshire's first since May 2024. They may also help Berkshire reduce its US\$373.3 billion year-end cash stake, which has grown because Berkshire has struggled to find companies and stocks to buy.

Abel also disclosed he bought 21 Class A shares of Berkshire on Wednesday for about US\$15 million, representing the after-tax value of his salary, and planned similar purchases in the future. He now owns 249 Class A shares, worth about US\$182 million as of Wednesday.

Speaking on CNBC, Abel said the stock repurchases help Berkshire create value for shareholders over the long term.

Berkshire normally discloses repurchases on a quarterly basis, and Abel said the disclosure that they had resumed is a one-time event.

Abel also said the goal of his own stock purchases was to demonstrate alignment with shareholders over the long term.



(March 5): Honda Motor Co will import cars from the US and China to sell in its home market as the Japanese carmaker looks to beef up its domestic lineup in the face of mounting losses from its auto business.

The automaker will begin selling two US-built cars — the Acura Integra Type S and the Honda Passport TrailSport Elite — in Japan in the second half of this year, it said Thursday. Honda said it's taking advantage of a simplified certification system in the wake of US President Donald Trump's push to sell more American cars in the Asian nation.

Separately, the Yomiuri newspaper reported that Honda is also planning to import its own electric vehicles from China, making it the first Japanese carmaker to sell Chinese EVs at home. A spokesperson for Honda declined to comment on the report.

Honda is reassessing its strategy in an attempt to be more competitive after its auto business logged a ¥166.4 billion (US\$1.1 billion or RM4.18 billion) operating loss

Honda to boost Japan lineup by importing cars from US, China

BY NICHOLAS TAKAHASHI
Bloomberg

during the first nine months of the fiscal year.

EV-related expenses, including losses and impairments on vehicles sold in the US and write-offs of development assets, have weighed on Honda's bottom line and the carmaker is losing ground to the tech-focused offerings of Chinese rivals.

Honda has also been hit hard by US import duties and its motorcycle business is now the company's key sales driver.

WORLD

A 900% fare hike shows Asian carriers can weather Iran war chaos

BY DANNY LEE & K OANH HA
Bloomberg

(March 5): Asian carriers like Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd and Singapore Airlines Ltd are among the best-positioned airlines to weather the war in the Middle East as travellers scramble for flights — and pay huge premiums — to escape the conflict.

Asian airlines have emerged as one of the go-to choices for people leaving the Middle East in the wake of US and Israeli strikes on Iran. Extensive airspace closures mean carriers like Emirates and Qatar Airways QSCC have essentially ground to a halt, creating opportunities for rivals that can fly non-stop between Europe and Asia.

Passengers in European hubs are handing over huge sums of money to secure a seat to Asia on flights that bypass the Middle East.

A one-way economy ticket flying Singapore Airlines from Heathrow to Singapore on March 5 costs HK\$66,767 (US\$8,540

or RM33,682.65) — a 900% increase on fares later in the month. The same ticket on a flight to Hong Kong is HK\$26,737, compared with HK\$5,670 in just a few weeks from now.

But it's unclear how long such sky-high fares, which are also helping absorb the surge in oil prices resulting from the war, will last. While prolonged disruptions would underpin higher fares for longer, a resolution to the conflict likely comes with a swift resumption of operations for the region's carriers given the Middle East's critical importance to global travel and trade flows.

“Asian airlines may see a short-term combination of higher fares, stronger cargo yields and modest market share gains,” said Linus Benjamin Bauer, founder of aviation advisory firm BAA & Partners. “But this is fundamentally a redistribution of traffic, not a structural rebalancing of global aviation networks.”

Suspension of regular services by dominant Gulf carriers Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad since Saturday has removed over 10% of daily international flight capacity, as measured in available seat kilometres, according to consultancy OAG Aviation.

More than 23,000 flights have been cancelled through March 5, according to Cirium. While a limited number of evacuation flights from the United Arab Emirates have been allowed, airspace across the Gulf including Qatar, Iran and Iraq remains closed to regular air traffic.

DHL sees higher 2026 operating profit even as geopolitical environment worsens

BY EMANUELE BERRO &
MATTHIAS INVERARDI
Reuters

(March 5): German logistics group DHL on Thursday forecast a higher operating profit for 2026, broadly in line with market expectations, despite the worsening geopolitical environment.

It expects earnings before interest and taxes to exceed 6.2 billion euros (US\$7.2 billion), after reporting 6.1 billion euros for last year. Free cash flow excluding acquisitions should be around three billion euros.

Both targets matched analysts' average forecasts in a company-provided consensus.

“There is still significant geopolitical volatility and uncertainty out there, as we have already seen in the first two months of the year,” CEO Tobias Meyer said in a statement. “Our forecast does not assume any improvement in the global economic environment.”

Logistics and shipping companies are facing mounting disruptions across air and sea routes as the conflict in the Middle East intensifies.

Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz on Sunday forced major carriers including Maersk, Hapag-Lloyd and CMA CGM to once again divert vessels around Africa, adding significant transit time and costs.

US parcel giant FedEx also said on Monday that it was temporarily halting services in five countries in the region.

DHL reported a 1.3% decline in its fourth-quarter operating profit to 1.83 billion euros, as expected by analysts. The result was weighed down by its freight forwarding business, where earnings slumped 36%.

European shipping and logistics firms have been grappling with weaker demand and a series of trade disruptions, including a raft of tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump.

“In air and ocean freight, we see declining freight rates. In road freight, we feel the weak economic situation in Europe, and especially in Germany,” Meyer said.

Airspace Impacted by Iran Conflict

■ Airspace closed ■ Airspace partially closed



Source: Flightradar24, Bloomberg reporting
Note: Saudi Arabia has implemented partial closures along the Iraq border and Persian Gulf. Jordan has decided to close their airspace during nighttime only. Data as of March 3, 10:00 UTC

Bloomberg

MARKETS

CPO RM 4,205.00 ▲ 26.00 OIL US\$ 82.86 ▲ 1.46 RM/USD 3.9447 RM/SGD 3.0912 RM/AUD 2.7791 RM/GBP 5.2682 RM/EUR 4.585

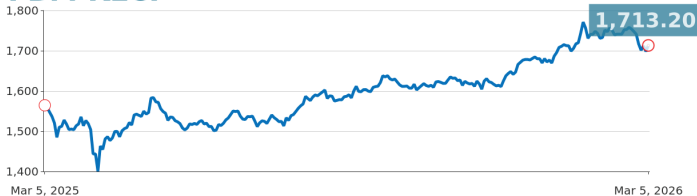
Top 20 active stocks

NAME	VOLUME (MIL)	CHANGE (RM)	CLOSE	YTD CHANGE (%)	MARKET CAP (RM MIL)
AIRASIA X BHD	90.26	-0.260	1.420	-18.39	4,772.4
CAPITAL A BHD	86.84	-0.045	0.455	9.64	2,032.7
BUMI ARMADA BHD	78.99	-0.010	0.345	16.95	2,045.1
TANCO HOLDINGS BHD	59.40	0.000	1.530	31.90	9,385.0
ZETRIX AI BHD	48.83	0.010	0.780	-3.70	6,285.3
HENGYUAN REFINING COMPANY	45.20	0.050	1.590	105.16	954.0
VELESTO ENERGY BHD	34.80	0.000	0.320	16.36	2,629.0
GDB HOLDINGS BHD	31.11	0.005	0.375	2.74	386.7
SIME DARBY BHD	29.42	0.030	2.410	12.09	16,425.6
PHARMANIAGA BHD	28.70	-0.005	0.270	-5.26	1,770.4
V.S INDUSTRY BHD	28.28	-0.005	0.315	-35.05	1,243.5
MALAYAN BANKING BHD	26.27	0.040	11.700	11.64	141,348.9
SINARAN ADVANCE GROUP BHD	25.93	-0.005	0.070	0.00	73.6
PUBLIC BANK BHD	25.18	0.060	4.900	7.93	95,112.4
NEXG BHD	25.09	0.025	0.295	5.36	1,095.0
KPJ HEALTHCARE BHD	24.75	0.000	3.100	15.24	14,032.5
OCR GROUP BHD	24.08	0.000	0.045	12.50	150.3
HIBISCUS PETROLEUM BHD	23.25	-0.020	1.980	32.00	1,460.0
MEGA FORTRIS BHD	22.07	0.035	1.010	13.48	853.4
PERDANA PETROLEUM BHD	21.98	-0.005	0.160	0.00	356.4

Data as compiled on Mar 5, 2026

Source: Bloomberg

FBM KLCI



World equity indices

	CLOSE	CHANGE	CHANGE (%)		CLOSE	CHANGE	CHANGE (%)
DOW JONES*	48,739.41	238.14	0.49	INDONESIA	7,710.54	133.47	1.76
S&P 500*	6,869.50	52.87	0.78	JAPAN	55,278.06	1032.52	1.90
NASDAQ 100*	25,093.68	373.60	1.51	KOREA	5,583.90	490.36	9.63
FTSE 100*	10,567.65	40.12	0.38	PHILIPPINES	6,380.53	72.69	1.15
AUSTRALIA	8,940.32	39.11	0.44	SINGAPORE	4,846.56	33.81	0.70
CHINA	4,108.57	26.09	0.64	TAIWAN	33,672.94	844.06	2.57
HONG KONG	25,321.34	71.86	0.28	THAILAND	1,417.29	32.68	2.36
INDIA	80,015.90	899.71	1.14	VIETNAM	1,808.51	-9.76	-0.54

Data as compiled on Mar 5, 2026

* Based on previous day's closing

Source: Bloomberg

Top gainers (ranked by %)

NAME	CLOSE	CHANGE (%)	VOLUME ('000)	YTD CHANGE (%)	MARKET CAP (RM MIL)
HONG SENG CONSOLIDATED BHD	0.010	100.00	884.40	100.00	56.2
SC ESTATE BUILDER BHD	0.010	100.00	16.70	0.00	53.2
WIDAD GROUP BHD	0.015	50.00	2,079.50	0.00	46.8
BSL CORPORATION BHD	0.020	33.33	1,517.60	33.33	38.7
ASTRAL ASIA BHD	0.110	29.41	1.00	22.22	76.2
WAJA KONSORTIUM BHD	0.050	25.00	300.50	0.00	55.8
MERIDIAN BHD	0.025	25.00	290.00	0.00	6.3
MMAG HOLDINGS BHD	0.030	20.00	12,946.70	-57.14	69.6
SERSOL BHD	0.030	20.00	2.40	20.00	24.1
HPP HOLDINGS BHD	0.355	18.33	108.20	14.52	138.0
JIANKUN INTERNATIONAL BHD	0.035	16.67	1,941.50	0.00	19.9
HANDAL ENERGY BHD	0.035	16.67	8.50	0.00	15.8
LKL INTERNATIONAL BHD	0.035	16.67	16.20	0.00	13.6
DNONCE TECHNOLOGY BHD	0.040	14.29	326.70	33.33	34.7
ZELAN BHD	0.040	14.29	1,029.20	33.33	33.8
HB GLOBAL LIMITED	0.040	14.29	1,160.70	0.00	31.3
BETAMEK BHD	0.575	11.65	5,577.20	16.87	261.2
EKSONS CORPORATION BHD	0.450	11.11	62.10	9.76	73.9
WEGMANS HOLDINGS BHD	0.100	11.11	32.90	0.00	55.0
A1 A.K. KOH GROUP BHD	0.215	10.26	95.40	-12.24	180.6

Data as compiled on Mar 5, 2026

Source: Bloomberg

Top gainers (ranked by RM)

NAME	CLOSE	CHANGE (RM)	VOLUME ('000)	YTD CHANGE (%)	MARKET CAP (RM MIL)
NESTLÉ (MALAYSIA) BHD	108.100	1.100	75.20	-5.18	25,349.5
MALAYSIAN PACIFIC INDUSTRIES	31.040	0.540	105.30	-3.72	6,514.8
PRESS METAL ALUMINIUM HOLDINGS	7.650	0.250	17,418.30	7.44	63,033.1
MALAYAN CEMENT BHD	8.330	0.210	2,700.90	8.75	11,582.6
HONG LEONG INDUSTRIES BHD	17.580	0.200	109.70	7.62	5,764.5
PETRONAS GAS BHD	17.980	0.180	444.90	-0.88	35,577.6
BATU KAWAN BHD	19.400	0.180	6.10	2.00	7,751.0
VSTECs BHD	4.970	0.180	1,324.10	22.72	1,789.2
TENAGA NASIONAL BHD	14.320	0.160	4,161.90	4.37	83,473.3
VITROX CORPORATION BHD	4.420	0.150	2,767.00	11.06	8,368.1
BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO (M)	6.380	0.130	447.40	44.02	1,821.7
PETRONAS MALAYSIA REFINING	4.790	0.130	328.50	24.42	1,293.3
KUALA LUMPUR KEPONG BHD	18.720	0.120	545.30	-4.50	20,895.3
IDEAL CAPITAL BHD	3.500	0.120	3.00	0.00	1,750.0
KSL HOLDINGS BHD	3.280	0.110	1,263.40	12.71	3,587.4
TA ANN HOLDINGS BHD	4.830	0.110	329.30	16.11	2,148.6
PETRONAS CHEMICALS GROUP BHD	3.550	0.100	13,568.80	-2.20	28,400.0
CHIN TECK PLANTATIONS BHD	10.700	0.100	5.70	2.10	977.6
CIMB GROUP HOLDINGS BHD	8.040	0.090	20,490.90	-2.55	86,813.9
TELEKOM MALAYSIA BHD	7.600	0.090	3,779.30	-5.59	29,166.8

Data as compiled on Mar 5, 2026

Source: Bloomberg

Top losers (ranked by %)

NAME	CLOSE	CHANGE (%)	VOLUME ('000)	YTD CHANGE (%)	MARKET CAP (RM MIL)
BORNEO OIL BHD	0.005	-50.00	218.60	0.00	75.9
FOCUS DYNAMICS GROUP BHD	0.005	-50.00	1,454.30	-50.00	31.9
METRONIC GLOBAL BHD	0.005	-50.00	231.90	-50.00	7.7
OVERSEA ENTERPRISE BHD	0.035	-22.22	30.00	-30.00	79.8
REKATECH CAPITAL BHD	0.020	-20.00	82.90	-42.86	11.8
AIRASIA X BHD	1.420	-15.48	90,263.00	-18.39	4,772.4
BCB BHD	0.220	-15.38	501.70	-15.38	90.8
FAST ENERGY HOLDINGS BHD	0.030	-14.29	266.50	20.00	13.6
AIZO GROUP BHD	0.035	-12.50	2,653.30	-30.00	69.7
S & F CAPITAL BHD	0.070	-12.50	281.30	7.69	55.1
ONE GLOVE GROUP BHD	0.110	-12.00	301.00	-33.33	64.1
LUSTER INDUSTRIES BHD	0.040	-11.11	409.00	0.00	120.9
ASIA POLY HOLDINGS BHD	0.090	-10.00	5,972.40	-30.77	94.9
LION POSIM BHD	0.280	-9.68	35.00	-9.68	64.8
CAPITAL A BHD	0.455	-9.00	86,838.40	9.64	2,032.7
PARKWOOD HOLDINGS BHD	0.055	-8.33	14.00	-15.38	32.8
ALDRICH RESOURCES BHD	0.055	-8.33	107.80	-31.25	18.9
UMS-NEIKEN GROUP BHD	0.865	-7.98	1.90	-4.95	69.2
SOLUTION GROUP BHD	0.060	-7.69	59.70	-20.00	29.2
MYCRON STEEL BHD	0.245	-7.55	32.70	-5.77	80.1

Data as compiled on Mar 5, 2026

Source: Bloomberg

Top losers (ranked by RM)

NAME	CLOSE	CHANGE (RM)	VOLUME ('000)	YTD CHANGE (%)	MARKET CAP (RM MIL)
FRASER & NEAVE HOLDINGS BHD	33.000	-0.900	198.70	-6.10	12,103.7
HONG LEONG FINANCIAL GROUP	20.840	-0.420	443.20	9.34	23,914.3
AIRASIA X BHD	1.420	-0.260	90,263.00	-18.39	4,772.4
UNITED PLANTATIONS BHD	30.000	-0.200	672.00	-0.20	18,730.7
KELINGTON GROUP BHD	4.910	-0.200	3,347.60	-4.83	3,860.8
AJINOMOTO (M) BHD	13.300	-0.180	16.60	-2.64	808.6
PETRONAS DAGANGAN BHD	22.200	-0.160	1,022.70	11.22	22,054.7
MNRB HOLDINGS BHD	2.560	-0.140	3,290.10	23.08	2,004.7
MBM RESOURCES BHD	4.890	-0.090	564.40	-6.14	1,911.4
HONG LEONG BANK BHD	22.980	-0.080	1,233.90	3.79	49,814.2
IOI PROPERTIES GROUP BHD	3.320	-0.080	11,056.60	25.76	18,280.4
AEON CREDIT SERVICE (M) BHD	5.510	-0.080	394.00	-4.01	2,813.5
SPRITZER BHD	2.770	-0.080	215.90	3.75	1,776.1
MALAYSIA SMELTING CORPORATION	1.880	-0.080	813.30	17.50	1,579.2
MN HOLDINGS BHD	1.530	-0.080	5,561.60	-7.27	1,008.3
UMS-NEIKEN GROUP BHD	0.865	-0.075	1.90	-4.95	69.2
ITMAX SYSTEM BHD	4.660	-0.070	1,597.50	-2.31	4,826.5
SOUTHERN CABLE GROUP BHD	1.910	-0.070	4,890.00	-16.59	2,159.2
SOUTHERN ACIDS (M) BHD	3.030	-0.070	13.50	-4.72	414.9
CYBERJAYA EDUCATION GROUP	1.150	-0.070	95.50	27.07	198.0

Data as compiled on Mar 5, 2026

Source: Bloomberg