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THE STRAITS TIMES

Sporting honours for bowler Darren Ong, sprinter Shanti

The winners of the Singapore Sports Awards on June 3 include (from left) bowler Darren Ong – Sportsman of the Year after winning the 2023 men's singles world title; kitefoiler Maximilian Maeder – the best Sportsboy for the third year in a row after a gold-laden season; and wushu exponent Zeanne Law – Sportsgirl of the Year for clinching the women's taijiquan world title. Sprint queen Shanti Pereira, the Sportswoman of the Year, could not attend the ceremony at Orchard Hotel as she is in Europe in preparation for the Paris Olympics. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

SEE SPORT • B16



Malaysia • By-elections loom for Anwar govt

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim faces the spectre of several by-elections in Malay-majority constituencies that his ruling coalition had lost in recent polls, which could deprive him of a two-thirds supermajority in Parliament. Leading opposition Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia declared the memberships of six MPs void when they failed to retract their support for Datuk Seri Anwar after a 14-day notice period ended.

SEE THE BIG STORY • A2

Covid-19 • MOH rejects opposition party's call to suspend vaccination

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has issued a strong rebuttal against the People's Power Party's call to temporarily suspend Covid-19 vaccination "in response to an increasing number of reports indicating significant adverse effects" of such vaccines. The opposition party issued a statement on May 29 quoting experts who had warned of the dangers of the vaccine. On June 3, MOH refuted each of those claims, saying it "categorically rejects these egregious and false claims". It added that all vaccines carry some risk, but that the risk of getting an infection if unvaccinated is far worse.

SEE THE BIG STORY • A4

A*Star to study impact of urban environment on mental health

It will examine factors such as design features, density and human behaviours

Ng Keng Gene
Correspondent

The Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*Star) will study over three years the impact of the urban environment on mental health, said Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat on June 3. The study will examine factors such as urban design features, density and human behaviours, Mr Heng said at the opening plenary of the World Cities Summit 2024, held at Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre. Mr Heng, who is chairman of the National Research Foundation Board, said insights from the study will "serve to better inform the way we rejuvenate, reinvent and reimagine our city-state". The A*Star study, which costs \$1 million and was commissioned by the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Housing Board, will be funded by the Government's \$28 billion Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2025 plan.

The five-year plan was launched in December 2020 with an initial sum of \$25 billion. The mental health study was awarded to A*Star in May 2024, and will be carried out by the agency's Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences. The Ministry of National Development (MND) said the study will devise a data-driven method to assess how different aspects of the built environment affect the mental well-being of the general population. Given Singapore's highly built-up environment, said MND, the country "offers a unique opportunity to conduct mental health research". "Current research in our local context has primarily focused on the impact of our built environment on physical well-being, and the benefits of greenery on mental well-being," MND added. "This project aims to expand this knowledge by investigating other aspects of the built environment more holistically, and their impacts on mental well-being."



Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat touring the booths at the World Cities Summit on June 3. He said the study will "serve to better inform the way we rejuvenate, reinvent and reimagine our city-state". PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

As part of the study, a list of indicators that link the built environment to mental well-being will be developed. MND said that these indicators could help urban planners understand how factors such as the provision of facilities, land use configuration, and the intensity of development on a piece of land may affect mental well-being. Researchers plan to validate the study's findings against four ongoing Singapore cohort studies: Growing Up In Singapore Towards Healthy Outcomes, Singapore Pre-conception Study Of Long-Term Maternal And Child Outcomes, Singapore Longitudinal Early Developmental Study and Mapping

Antenatal Maternal Stress. MND said that the four studies have collected extensive data from study participants using validated questionnaires, including mental well-being indicators. The ministry added that findings from the new study will inform how the authorities plan, design and prioritise built environment interventions to enable a healthier and more liveable environment. The three-day World Cities Summit, held every two years in Singapore, ends on June 4. It gathers city leaders, industry experts and others who work on urban environments, and the 2024 edition has delegates from more than 90 cities around the world. Among its highlights was the Mayors Forum, chaired by National Development Minister Desmond Lee on June 2. Speaking at the summit's opening plenary on June 3, Mr Lee announced an updated Singapore Liveability Framework – a set of principles and systems that guide city planners and policymakers. The upgraded framework has a new emphasis on "collaborative ecosystems". Such systems involve the public, the private sector and the Govern-

ment, recognising that citizens have a part to play in policymaking, and in the governance of cities. A series of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) will be signed during the summit. The Singapore Land Authority (SLA) and the Singapore Management University (SMU) signed an MOU on June 3. SLA said that its geospatial information – referring to data associated with a particular location such as aerial images and street maps – will be used in the Cooling Singapore 2.0 research project, which SMU co-leads. Among the project's products is a Digital Urban Climate Twin of Singapore that will explore the heat effects of buildings, transport and industry. SLA said its data, and the digital twin, will aid policymakers in Singapore in assessing effective climate adaptation solutions that can enhance the city's climate resilience. During a panel discussion on leveraging geospatial data to improve citizens' quality of life, Mr Vincent Karremans, vice-mayor of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, said such data has helped his city to prioritise investments in climate adaptation. "Due to this geospatial technology, we know exactly which neighbourhoods, which streets – even portions of streets – are the most vulnerable to heatwaves or heavy rainfall because we can put that all into a model," he said.

Such systems involve the public, the private sector and the Govern-

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SEE THE BIG STORY • A4

Airline passengers, revenues globally set to hit records in 2024

DUBAI – Airlines will fly nearly five billion passengers in 2024 and revenues will soar close to US\$1 trillion (\$1.35 trillion) – both record highs – said the International Air Transport Association (Iata) on June 3 as the industry roars back after the Covid-19 pandemic. The trade body also said it expected the world's airlines to post US\$30 billion in net earnings this year, up from its previous estimate of US\$25.7 billion. However, total expenses are also expected to hit a record high this year, climbing 9.4 per cent to US\$936 billion, Iata announced at

its annual general meeting (AGM) in Dubai. The expected US\$30 billion profit "is a great achievement considering the recent deep pandemic losses", Iata director general Willie Walsh said. "Without a doubt, aviation is vital to the ambitions and prosperity of individuals and economies. Strengthening airline profitability and growing financial resilience is important," he added. The Covid-19 pandemic plunged the air industry into crisis, grounding fleets and costing thousands of jobs.

Iata put the losses at US\$183 billion between 2020 and 2022. But despite the bounce-back to record passengers and revenues of US\$996 billion expected in 2024, some clouds remain for the industry. Besides record-high expenses, return on invested capital is estimated at 5.7 per cent in 2024, about 3.4 percentage points below the average cost of capital. "An aggregate return above the cost of capital... continues to elude the global airline industry," Iata said. Airlines are facing a sharp rise in

costs due to shortages of parts and labour and challenges related to climate change, including flooded runways and forest fires. Six weeks ago, Dubai's airport – the world's busiest for international passengers – was closed by severe flooding that left standing water on the runway and forced the cancellation of more than 2,000 flights. The extreme rainfall in the United Arab Emirates was probably exacerbated by man-made global warming, according to an international grouping of scientists that examines extreme weather

events. Some experts also raised the alarm about climate change after two major incidents of in-flight turbulence in recent days, including during a Singapore Airlines flight, resulting in the death of a British passenger. Iata, which groups more than 300 airlines representing 83 per cent of global traffic, said it would hold its 2025 AGM in New Delhi. India is witnessing an aviation boom, with airlines placing large orders such as Air India's record purchase of 470 aircraft in 2023. Airlines' operating profits are

expected to rise nearly 15 per cent to US\$59.9 billion, although net profits will grow more slowly at 11.3 per cent, Iata added. AFP

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More airlines reviewing safety protocols after SQ321 incident

Reports of turbulence have increased, but severe cases are still rare, says Iata

Grace Leong
Senior Correspondent

DUBAI – The number of turbulence incidents reported by airlines has increased, although severe turbulence remains rare, the International Air Transport Association (Iata) said at its annual meeting on June 3.

Speaking at a media briefing, Iata's senior vice-president for operations, safety and security Nick Careen said the Flight SQ321 turbulence incident – which killed one passenger and injured dozens – has led to more airlines reviewing their standard operating procedures (SOPs) on safety, but no “wholesale changes” have been made in its wake.

Singapore Airlines (SIA) had updated its safety measures shortly after the severe turbulence incident involving SQ321 on May 21 – meal service must now be com-

pletely paused, and cabin crew members have to buckle up when the seat-belt sign is turned on.

Twelve people were injured when Qatar Airways Flight QR017 struck severe turbulence a few days later.

Asked if other airlines have changed their protocols, Mr Careen said: “Airlines have had pretty solid standard operating procedures when it comes to seat belts and adherence to seat-belt signs. The (SQ321) incident heightened awareness of that and perhaps made airlines reinforce and train their crew.”

He noted that the last inflight death caused by turbulence was in 1997, on a United Airlines flight from Narita to Honolulu.

“Fortunately, it doesn't happen that often, but when it happens, airlines will review SOPs and see if they need to be changed. We've not seen any indication that there have been wholesale changes other than increased awareness,” he said.

About 10 hours into its flight on May 21, SQ321 encountered “sudden extreme turbulence” over Myanmar's Irrawaddy Basin at 37,000 feet.

Asked if airlines have adjusted their flight routes to avoid passing this area, Mr Careen said: “What is changing is the availability of information to allow for pilots to make operational decisions real-time based on the increased amount of data and data sharing, which is a good thing. So that may result in more diversions around potential impacted areas.”

He added that while some studies suggest that climate change could potentially accelerate turbulence, there is nothing that illustrates that it has. But this is still something the industry will continue to monitor closely.

Speaking to The Straits Times on June 3, Emirates president Tim Clark said the airline already has “some fairly strict protocols” to deal with turbulence.

“Probably the lessons from what happened with Singapore Airlines will bring more laser focus on that. You can expect the industry will be fairly vigilant now,” he added.

“We have been flying through areas with turbulent activity for many years. We know how to deal with those. Sometimes you're unlucky. I think SQ is a bit unlucky, quite obviously. But it could have

been any one of us that could have been caught that way.”

Emirates last week said it was adding new technology that provides pilots with real-time, highly accurate turbulence information and forecasts that will help them plot the best paths around affected areas for safer and more efficient navigation.

To that end, it joined Iata's Turbulence Aware Platform – a global data-sharing platform launched in 2020 – and will integrate the platform into a mobile navigation system made by Germany's Lufthansa.

Iata said 21 airlines are currently feeding data to the platform, and about 150 million reports have been generated by participating carriers since its inception.

SIA and Iata have been in discussions over various options in relation to the platform, before the SQ321 incident occurred, said Mr Adrian Ganea, Iata's senior product manager for the platform.

He said the reports made to the platform provide data such as visibility on the altitude, coordinates, turbulence intensity, and wind and air temperature.

Asked why Emirates joined the platform, Mr Clark said this has been in the works well before the SQ321 incident.

“The important thing is that the information that comes from the community flying in certain areas is passed on a real-time basis to all other pilots flying.”

RwandAir chief executive Yvonne Makolo said: “We have always been safety-conscious... We will continue enforcing our SOPs... I think it's clearer now how important this is, especially for passengers to follow the directives they are given.”

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Anwar could face by-elections in Malay-majority wards if rogue MPs lose seats

Shannon Teoh
Malaysia Bureau Chief

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim faces the spectre of several by-elections in Malay-majority constituencies that his ruling coalition had lost in recent polls, which could deprive him of a two-thirds super-majority in Parliament.

Leading opposition party Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia declared the memberships of six rogue MPs void when they failed to retract their support for Datuk Seri Anwar after a 14-day notice period ended on May 31.

The Speaker of Parliament, who is a close ally of Mr Anwar, will now be forced to pick one of two options. He must declare the wards vacant under the anti-party hopping law (APHL) – thus triggering by-elections – or decide that the as-yet untested legislation, which took effect on Oct 5, 2022, does not apply in this case.

Bersatu has said it will write to the Speaker when Parliament reconvenes on June 24, informing him that the rogue MPs failed to respond to party orders to declare their allegiances by May 31.

Observers believe that Speaker Johari Abdul, a top official in Mr Anwar's Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) before taking up the parliamentary position, is caught between a rock and a hard place.

Should Tan Sri Johari refuse to declare vacancies for the seats – thus averting by-elections – this will not only undermine the APHL, which the ruling Pakatan Harapan (PH) alliance lobbied hard to implement before the November 2022 general election, but also the commitment to reforms pledged by Mr Anwar's multi-coalition government.

This will give further ammunition to critics who accuse PH of double standards and hypocrisy, given how the Anwar administration has not walked the talk on reforms such as equal constituency allocations, reviewing key appointments to institutions like the anti-graft agency, and broadening freedom of speech.

However, with state polls and other by-elections since the general election showing ebbing support by the crucial Malay majority, analysts believe that keeping the Bersatu rebels in their seats will be the priority, given the lion's share of the electorate in these areas who are Malay.

“So what if the APHL is rendered useless? The political cost is higher if they get thrashed in the by-elections,” independent political risk consultant Adib Zalkapli told The Straits Times.

Mr Anwar currently has the backing of 153 members of the 222-strong Parliament. If Bersatu retains all six federal seats, it would not only bring the government below the two-thirds mark of 148, it would also further cement the administration's inability to recover Malay voter support.

But party president Muhyiddin Yassin said that only 25 MPs and 58 state assemblymen responded with signed letters affirming their allegiance to the party.

In total, Bersatu holds 31 parliamentary seats and 60 state seats.

Tan Sri Muhyiddin declared on June 1: “According to Article 10.4 of Bersatu's Constitution, non-compliance by Bersatu elected representatives on any instruction issued by the Supreme Council is akin to terminating their memberships immediately.”

Former Selangor Bersatu chief Abdul Rashid Asari was also a non-responder, having earlier declared his support for Selangor Chief Minister Amirudin Shari, a PKR vice-president until last year.

The APHL states that a seat will be vacant if the incumbent is no longer a member of the party under which they were elected, save if they were expelled or the party ceases to exist. Bersatu amended its Constitution in March so that a refusal to abide by party directives would be tantamount to leaving the party.

The amendments mirror those done in 2022 by the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Amanah Negara – PKR's partners in the PH coalition – as well as that done in 2023 by Umno, another partner in the PH-led administration.

In response to Mr Muhyiddin's declaration, Gua Musang MP Azizi Abu Naim – one of the Bersatu elected representatives who declared their support for Mr Anwar – has raised questions on the legitimacy of the notice sent to them by the party to declare their stance.

Mr Azizi – who is also a state assemblyman in Kelantan, thus bringing the potential number of by-elections to eight – told local media on June 2 that the group had written a letter to Bersatu secretary-general Hamzah Zainudin seeking an explanation on the legitimacy of the party notice.

“In the letter, we are also seeking explanation from the party on who are involved in the special committee tasked with scrutinising the response to the notice from all the representatives.”

Nonetheless, analysts believe that Mr Azizi does not have much of an argument, and his point “does not hold water”.

“The idea of ‘ceasing to be a member’ (automatic relinquishment of membership) is actually to take away discretion. Things become very straightforward – you do this, you have the consequence. No discretion, no negotiation,” Sunway University political scientist Wong Chin Huat told ST.

In the event that by-elections are held, it would be a messy process for Mr Anwar's allies. The Premier may have to allow the turncoats a chance to defend their seats to avoid the embarrassing situation where they recant their support for him.

While the Bersatu rebels could contest as Umno candidates, the Malay party's own warlords would surely make claims to all these seats. This was seen in the May by-election for Kuala Kubu Bharu in Selangor, a low-stakes vote which nonetheless witnessed heated debate among ruling parties over who would represent the government to defend the state constituency.

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Sustainable aviation fuel is expected to account for up to 65 per cent of the total carbon mitigation needed to achieve net-zero carbon emissions in air transportation by 2050. Global aviation body Iata says its registry will help airlines meet regulations such as the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation. LIANHE ZAOBAO FILE PHOTO

Iata to set up sustainable aviation fuel registry as production slated to triple

DUBAI – The International Air Transport Association (Iata) aims to launch a sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) registry by the first quarter of 2025, to accelerate the take-up of SAF by accounting for usage and reporting emissions reduction from it.

Announcing the registry on June 2 at the start of its three-day annual meeting in Dubai, Iata said the registry will ensure that the environmental attributes of SAF are properly recorded and transferred between parties.

This will allow airlines and their customers to report emissions reduction accurately, aligning with reporting obligations and international standards, it added.

Iata said 17 airlines, one airline group, six national authorities, three original equipment manufacturers and one fuel producer are supporting the effort to develop the registry, including the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) and Singapore Airlines.

The planned registry comes as the association said its projections for a tripling of SAF production in 2024 to 1.5 million tonnes are on track. This would account for 0.53 per cent of aviation's fuel need in 2024, Iata said.

SAF is expected to account for up to 65 per cent of the total carbon

mitigation needed to achieve net-zero carbon emissions in air transportation by 2050.

“The SAF registry will help meet the critical needs of all stakeholders as part of the global effort to ramp up SAF production.

“Governments need a trusted system to track the quality and quantities of SAF used. SAF producers need to accurately account for what has been delivered and effectively decarbonised,” said Iata director general Willie Walsh.

He noted that corporate customers must be able to transparently account for their Scope 3 emissions – or indirect emissions arising from a company's supply chain – while airlines must have certainty that they can claim the environmental benefits of the SAF they purchase.

“The registry will help create a global SAF market by ensuring that airlines have access to SAF wherever it is produced, and that SAF producers have access to airlines regardless of their location,” he added.

Iata said the registry will help airlines meet regulations such as the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, ensuring compliance with SAF mandates and providing transparency on emissions reduc-

tions to the authorities.

It will provide safeguards against double counting and double claiming, the association added.

Dr Marie Owens Thomsen, Iata's senior vice-president for sustainability and chief economist, told The Straits Times that the association is grateful to both SIA and CAAS for their support and help in developing the registry.

“Nobody has done this – decarbonise aviation and the market for SAF doesn't really exist yet... It is very courageous of them to take these steps, and I am convinced that Singapore is a country where the results of the policies will be analysed, and if they turn out to be not as good as hoped, change will occur,” she said.

“Creating this global SAF market is a work in progress, and different countries are trying different things... The oil and gas sector could be co-processing. They could try to adjust the product mix in refineries to make more sustainable aviation fuel.

“We need to deprioritise diesel and prioritise SAF... and turn refineries into biorefineries that produce more aviation fuel,” she added.

To achieve a 5 per cent reduction in carbon emissions for international aviation from SAF by 2030,

around 27 per cent of all expected renewable fuel production capacity available in 2030 would need to be SAF. Currently, SAF accounts for just 3 per cent of all renewable fuel production.

There are several potential solutions to accelerate aviation's access to SAF, the association said.

About 80 per cent of SAF to be produced over the next five years is likely to come from hydrogenated fatty acids – used cooking oils and animal fats. Finnish energy giant Neste's refinery in Tuusula is the world's largest production facility producing sustainable aviation fuel this way.

Accelerating the use of other feedstock including agricultural and forestry residues and municipal waste will expand the potential for SAF production, Iata noted.

“Existing refineries can be used to co-process up to 5 per cent of approved renewable feedstock alongside the crude oil streams,” Iata said.

The association noted that current renewable fuel plants are designed to maximise diesel production and often benefit from incentives as well as demand from road transportation.

“Incentives aimed at SAF can help facilitate the renewable diesel-SAF switch, which requires minimal modifications at existing standalone renewable fuel facilities,” Iata said.

Some 140 renewable fuel projects have been announced. If these proceed to production, total renewable fuel production capacity could reach 51 million tonnes by 2030.

Grace Leong



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MOH rejects call by PPP to temporarily halt Covid-19 jabs

Studies listed in party statement not written by authors cited, or were already debunked

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has issued a strong rebuttal against a call made by the People's Power Party (PPP) to temporarily suspend Covid-19 vaccination "in response to an increasing number of reports indicating significant adverse effects" of such vaccines.

The PPP had issued the statement on May 29, quoting eight people it named as experts, warning of the dangers of the vaccine.

MOH refuted those claims on June 3, saying that it "categorically rejects these egregious and false claims" by "these so-called experts".

It also pointed out that the PPP's list of scientific articles "were mostly from the same group of authors, including some who have

been reported to be promoting messages against Covid-19 vaccination".

The ministry said all vaccines carry some risk, but the risks of getting an infection if unvaccinated are far worse.

"In a pandemic of this nature, excess deaths are inevitable. The primary reason why Singapore recorded one of the lowest excess death rates in the world during the pandemic is (that) the majority of Singaporeans took the vaccines," it said.

"Excess deaths" refers to higher rates of deaths than would normally be the case.

MOH added that during the wave caused by the JN.1 variant, which peaked in December 2023, the number of people aged 60 years and older who were not vaccinated and needed hospitalisation and/or intensive care was almost double

that of their peers who were up to date with their vaccinations.

The ministry acknowledged that the mRNA vaccine can cause myocarditis, or inflammation of the heart muscle, and pericarditis, or the swelling of the tissue surrounding the heart, in young men aged 18 to 29 years.

But it said that it remains safer for these young men to get vaccinated as real world data from the United States shows that getting Covid-19 infection pushed up their risk of getting these conditions by seven to eight times.

"There is a very large body of scientific evidence that overwhelmingly shows that the protection from Covid-19 vaccines outweighs the side effects," MOH said.

"Yet, several groups continue to spread misinformation, either by quoting scientific literature out of context or sharing materials from non-credible sources who cannot be held accountable, to cast doubts on the safety and effectiveness of Covid-19 vaccines."

It added that it has been trans-

parent in reporting the incidence of side effects.

As for PPP's claim of excess deaths linked to high vaccination rates, the MOH said most of the excess deaths were caused by the pandemic, and that vaccination reduces the risk of death.

"Of the Covid-19 deaths, there was an over-representation of persons who were not fully vaccinated, reflecting that they were more likely to die from Covid-19 infection compared to persons who were fully vaccinated."

Furthermore, the vaccine, it said, protects against severe illness and so reduces the incidence of long Covid, a term referring to debilitating effects from an infection that could last months, or longer, such as loss of taste, extreme fatigue, shortness of breath and joint pain.

Covid-19 infection can also cause

VACCINATION SAVED LIVES

In a pandemic of this nature, excess deaths are inevitable. The primary reason why Singapore recorded one of the lowest excess death rates in the world during the pandemic is (that) the majority of Singaporeans took the vaccines.



THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

complications related to the heart and brain.

MOH said people "need to draw the right conclusions and follow the scientific evidence".

Several examples given by the PPP were either not written by the authors they cited, or their work had been debunked, said the MOH.

For example, the PPP cited Dr Peter McCullough, who claimed that the risks of myocarditis outweigh the benefits of vaccination.

MOH said his article, A Systematic Review Of Autopsy Findings In Deaths After Covid-19 Vaccination, was removed by Preprints With The Lancet.

The reason given was "the study's conclusions are not supported by the study methodology".

The Lancet journal said preprints "are early-stage research papers that have not been peer-reviewed".

Regarding the claim made by Dr Geert Vanden Bosshe, a virologist from Belgium, that mass vaccinations expedited the evolution of the Sars-CoV-2 virus, which causes Covid-19, MOH said that viruses naturally mutate as they replicate, and that there is no evidence that the mRNA vaccines contributed to evolution.

Three others mentioned by the PPP – Dr Robert Malone, Dr Aseem Malhotra and Professor Angus Dalgleish – did not author the articles which the PPP had quoted them as saying.

In mid-May, Health Minister Ong Ye Kung warned that Singapore was facing an upsurge in Covid-19, which he expected to peak towards the end of June.

At that time, about 250 people were hospitalised for Covid-19 each day.

This has since gone up to an average of 371 a day, an MOH spokesman told The Straits Times, although the number requiring intensive care remains low.

More people are also being diagnosed with Covid-19. There were 24,800 cases in the week of May 19-25, up from 21,900 the previous week.

Looking back at the pandemic, which raged globally for more than two years from 2020, the ministry said: "The high level of vaccine protection in our society averted many Covid-related deaths, protected our healthcare system from being overwhelmed, and allowed us to preserve lives and livelihoods."

"The normalcy in our daily lives today is in large part due to the protection that Covid-19 vaccines provide."

On May 18, the MOH said that about 80 per cent of people here who have completed their initial or additional vaccine doses have not received a dose within the past year.

The recommendation is for people who are 60 years and older, or who are medically vulnerable, to be vaccinated annually.

The Covid-19 vaccine remains free for all eligible residents at 250 Healthier SG clinics and at five joint testing and vaccination centres, and selected polyclinics.

Urging people, especially those at higher risk of severe illness if infected, to stay up to date with their Covid-19 vaccines, the spokesman said the ministry "is closely tracking the KP.1 and KP.2 wave, and is ready to implement additional measures to preserve our healthcare capacity if necessary".

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From right: Ambassador of Mexico to Singapore Agustin Garcia-Lopez Loaeza and Mr Eduardo Clark, head of the Digital Agency for Public Innovation in Mexico City, receiving the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize 2024 on June 3. With them are President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister for National Development Desmond Lee, as well as Mr Loh Chin Hua, chief executive and executive director of Keppel Ltd. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize winners to collaborate on tackling urban issues

Isabelle Liew

A network has been launched in Singapore to bring government officials and academics together to collaborate on projects and discuss urban challenges.

The City Network for the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize will foster partnerships across cities, and allow them to share knowledge and build up their capabilities, said National Development Minister Desmond Lee at the World Cities Summit 2024 on June 3.

The network, set up by the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC) and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), currently comprises the seven winners of the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize such as Bilbao in Spain, Suzhou in China, Vienna in Austria and Mexico City, as well as organisations from those cities.

The biennial award recognises outstanding contributions towards the creation of vibrant, liveable and sustainable urban communities. CLC and URA also invited 20 cities that received special mentions under the award to join the network.

Cities in the network will identify solutions to urban challenges, and collaborate on research projects and joint publications, said

the organisations.

The outcomes of such projects will be shared at future World Cities Summits.

Speaking at the summit, held at Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre, Mr Lee said Singapore will work with member cities on projects that could include research on sustainable urban rejuvenation and a publication on approaches to quality and affordable housing.

"We hope such initiatives will not only enable cities to tackle current and future urban challenges, but also build strong inter-city relationships across different levels – governors, mayors, city halls, planning departments and knowledge organisations," he said.

In a forum at the summit on June 3, representatives from the seven award-winning cities discussed urban challenges they hope the network will tackle.

Mr Tom Wright, president of the Regional Plan Association in New York City – which won the prize in 2012 – said he hopes to address the tight housing supply in the city as housing production had "dropped dramatically" during the economic recession from 2007 to 2009, and has yet to recover.

He said the vacancy rate of rental housing in New York, which was already a "very tight market", has declined to about 1.5 per cent in 2024,

down from about 4.5 per cent in 2022.

"We are short by about half a million units today and, by 2035, there will be a million units if we don't dramatically change direction," he said.

"My plea to this group is to help us sort this out because we are failing in New York and we need help."

Mr Johannes Lutter, head of Urban Development and Mobility at Urban Innovation Vienna, said that vulnerable groups such as women and the elderly have to be taken care of amid the climate and social crises.

"This is not only a question of infrastructure, but also a question of community work, and we are eager to learn from how you are doing it in your society," he added.

Vienna, the capital of Austria, won the award in 2020.

In a separate session, representatives from 10 cities, including award winners and those that received special mentions, shared their urban initiatives after being recognised by the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize.

For instance, the Indian city of Ahmedabad completed the first phase of a waterfront development – comprising parks, markets and sports complexes – along the Sabarmati River in 2015. The city received a special mention in 2012.

Mr Dev Choudhary, Ahmedabad

Municipal Corporation's deputy municipal commissioner, said a challenge was relocating the 1,000 families who lived along the waterfront. They were eventually allowed to continue their livelihoods along the river, and were provided affordable housing in developed parts of the city.

Yokohama, which received a special mention in 2014, set a goal in 2019 to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 in an effort to tackle climate change.

Mr Kubota Atsushi, executive director of the Global Networks Department in Yokohama's International Affairs Bureau, said that to reach this goal, it aims to fully decarbonise its Central Business District by 2030.

One way is to set up its own district heating and cooling system using solar and wind power as sources of electricity, he added.

President Tharman Shanmugaratnam presented the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize 2024 to Mr Eduardo Clark, head of the Digital Agency for Public Innovation in Mexico City, at a dinner banquet held in Clifford Pier on June 3.

Mexico City was recognised for its ability to address many complex urban challenges and achieve transformational progress within five years.

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Benefits in making data collected from citizens public: City leaders

Ng Keng Gene
Correspondent

Data collected from citizens should be made publicly available at no cost, said city leaders at the World Cities Summit on June 3.

Speaking at the Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre, a panel on empowering communities through geospatial data – information associated with particular locations – said that doing so will allow for richer analyses, which will ultimately benefit citizens.

Mr Vincent Karremans, vice-mayor of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, said that even without charging for data, cities are already making money from it, because they are able to make better investment decisions.

He was responding to a question posed by panel moderator Ng Siau Yong, director for geospatial and data at the Singapore Land Authority, who asked panellists if proceeds from selling data should be put back into improving communities, or whether data collected using tax dollars should be made free.

Referring to such data, Mr Karremans said: "In a way, we are already making money with it, because we are making better investment decisions – so there is already value from providing it for free."

He explained that using such data, private developers and the government might be able to save money through their decisions and channel this money into public causes.

Earlier during the panel, Mr Karremans said that geospatial data had allowed his city to decide which areas were most in need of infrastructural upgrades and allocate resources there.

He gave the example of choosing which sewers to upgrade, based on data that showed which areas were most vulnerable during heavy rain.

Singapore Management University president Lily Kong agreed that citizen data should be free to access.

Monetising it "necessarily means that we are curtailing the opportunity for different groups to access the data that can actually bring much value in interpretation and possibly solution", she said.

Professor Kong added that integrated education and research is needed for data to be properly analysed and interpreted.

While one can be proficient with data manipulation and analysis, she said, "without the understanding of society, social relations, cultural norms, ideologies,

et cetera, it is very easy to sometimes make the wrong interpretation".

Acknowledging that concerns around data privacy exist, Prof Kong said that nevertheless, where data can be released, it is "important for citizen science, and for academics to undertake research, because from that, we get additional perspectives that can actually contribute to the virtuous loop of making life better".

Melbourne Lord Mayor Sally Capp said "knowledge is power", and city governments that are closely connected to community have "an obligation to empower our citizens", adding that society is "better off for it".

Asked by Mr Ng if they were concerned that making data easily accessible could be abused – such as by advocacy groups who use it to argue for benefits for a select few – Ms Capp said that data gives governments and citizens a common platform to discuss policy.

Governments must be prepared to use the same data to explain why policy suggestions will or will not work, she added.

Mr Karremans said that having data that governments and citizens can discuss is preferable to situations where citizen groups try to make a case for something that is non-quantifiable.

"We can have a conversation based on the same figures, and that makes it more transparent and also more fruitful (for citizens) to converse with us," he added.

Prof Kong said that as societies mature, access to data increases the possibility of participatory governance.

"That then makes for higher-quality debate in society that can then lead to better outcomes," she added. "But, of course, it does require readiness to engage openly and to acknowledge that actually, sometimes the perspective of interest groups might actually be valid."

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Mr Vincent Karremans, vice-mayor of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, said that geospatial data had allowed his city to decide which areas were most in need of infrastructural upgrades and allocate resources there.

Singaporean woman killed in Spain

Suspect named as beneficiary of victim's CPF savings

Ang Qing

The man suspected of killing Singaporean Audrey Fang has been confirmed as a beneficiary of her Central Provident Fund (CPF) savings, a Spanish media outlet reported on June 3.

Singaporean Mitchell Ong, 43, was arrested in Alicante in Spain

nearly a week after Ms Fang, 39, was found dead with more than 30 stab wounds and other injuries on April 10.

A court in the town of Cieza heard that Singapore's CPF Board confirmed on May 16 that Ms Fang had named Ong as a beneficiary, supporting suspicions of an economic motive behind the murder, according to La Verdad.

In April, the Civil Guard, one of

two national police forces, had found a note on Ms Fang's iPad that declared a decision to name a "long-time friend and trusted confidant" as the recipient of her CPF savings in the event of her death.

The note also granted the beneficiary a "friendly loan of US\$50,000 (\$68,000) based on our friendship in the past", separate from the CPF nomination.

According to her family, Ms Fang

had accumulated up to €340,000 (S\$498,000) in her CPF accounts, the Spanish daily revealed.

A CPF Board spokesperson told The Straits Times on June 3 that the board did not receive any requests from the Spanish authorities, but it had disclosed the late Ms Fang's nomination details to her next of kin.

When CPF nominations are contested posthumously, the board will withhold the distribution of the deceased member's CPF savings until investigations are completed, said the spokesperson.

"If the nomination is found to be invalid, CPF savings will generally be distributed based on an earlier nomination if any, or according to intestacy laws," the spokesperson added.

The police in Spain have been in-

vestigating a possible economic motive behind Ms Fang's death.

In October 2023, Ms Fang and Ong had an exchange on WhatsApp, in which he thanked the Singaporean architect for naming him as the beneficiary of her savings, according to La Verdad.

Previously, the court had requested Singapore to provide banking, property and economic information on both Ong and the victim.

Ms Fang's family told ST that in their attempt to understand her relationship with Ong, they found letters showing Ms Fang had bought two investment-linked policies from insurer AIA through Ong in 2015.

According to an old LinkedIn profile, which is no longer available, the suspect was a financial

planner at Manulife Singapore between 2011 and 2013, and had worked at AIA Singapore between 2014 and 2019.

Two people close to Ms Fang have testified in the case, the La Verdad newspaper reported.

Meanwhile, the Civil Guard is analysing a terabyte of information from the hard drives belonging to Ong and Ms Fang, as well as information extracted from Ong's phone.

According to the Spanish news outlet, the court has said there is clear, objective evidence of the suspect's participation in the murder.

These have emerged from the camera recordings, data provided by telephone operators and "multiple well-founded suspicions".

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Philippines to join peace summit after surprise Zelensky visit

Marcos reiterates his nation's support for Kyiv in war during meeting in Manila

Mara Cepeda
Philippines Correspondent

MANILA – The Philippines is attending the upcoming peace summit in Switzerland on the Ukraine war, disclosed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky following his surprise meeting with his Philippine counterpart Ferdinand Marcos Jr in Manila on June 3.

The two leaders met just two days after Mr Zelensky's unscheduled visit to Singapore during the Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia's premier defence forum, where he asked Asia-Pacific leaders to join the summit on June 15 and 16 aimed at bringing peace to his war-torn country.

"We discussed the inaugural

Global Peace Summit and the importance of South-east Asian countries being represented there. I am pleased that the Philippines will participate in the summit," Mr Zelensky posted via his official account on social media platform X.

It remains unclear for now if Mr Marcos himself will attend the summit, or if a ranking official will be sent instead.

The two presidents were supposed to meet on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue during the weekend, but their schedules did not synchronise. Mr Zelensky then flew to Manila in the early morning of June 3.

Both leaders criticised China during the security forum, which was held amid growing tensions between Beijing and Manila over



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr at the presidential palace in Manila on June 3. They met two days after Mr Zelensky's visit to Singapore for the Shangri-La Dialogue, where he asked Asia-Pacific leaders to join the summit on the Ukraine war. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

the South China Sea territorial dispute, as well as the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

In his keynote address in Singa-

pore, Mr Marcos hit out at what he described as the "illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive actions" being taken in the disputed South

China Sea, though he did not directly name Beijing.

Tensions have been boiling between Beijing and Manila during these past months, as the China Coast Guard has been firing water cannon on Philippine ships sending supplies to troops stationed at a remote outpost in a disputed shoal.

Mr Zelensky, meanwhile, held a separate press briefing in Singapore and accused China of allegedly helping Russia thwart the peace summit in Switzerland.

During their meeting, Mr Marcos told Mr Zelensky that the Philippines is looking forward to working together with Ukraine in forging peace.

He also welcomed Ukraine's plan to open an embassy in the Philippines later in 2024.

"That's certainly very good news because we would very much like to continue to help, in any way, that the Philippines can through multi-lateral (channels) and the United

Nations, and even through other agencies such as the European Union," said Mr Marcos.

He then reiterated the Philippines' support for Ukraine in its war against Russia.

"We will continue to do all that we can to promote peace and to bring an end to the fighting and to come to a political resolution of your country," Mr Marcos said.

"I think everybody fully understands that it is easier said than done, and it will be a difficult road to find our way back to the situation that is morally acceptable not only to Ukraine, but also to the rest of the world," he added.

In November 2022, the Philippine leader had described Russia's invasion of Ukraine's territories as "unacceptable", and asked both nations to resolve the conflict in a diplomatic manner.

The Philippines also voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Mr Zelensky thanked Manila for its continued support.

"We're very thankful to be here in your country, which supports Ukraine, our territorial integrity and sovereignty. Thank you so much for your 'big word' and clear position about us, about this Russian occupation of our territories," he said.

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SEE OPINION • B1, FORUM • B5

Power trip following lightning strike stalls MRT services on NSL for over two hours

Ang Qing

A traction power fault disrupted commutes along the northern stretch of the North-South MRT Line for more than two hours during peak traffic on June 3.

Transport operator SMRT said the fault, which occurred at about 5.50pm, meant that no trains could travel from Choa Chu Kang to Woodlands.

Preliminary investigations so far found that a lightning strike caused traction power to trip, and a small fire had broken out in a power control box next to the train track, about 20m from the platform of Kranji station.

The Singapore Civil Defence Force said the fire had burned itself out before its officers arrived.

No injuries were reported, and the cause of the fire and root cause of the traction power fault is under investigation, said SMRT.

As the operator's staff and engineers worked to get the system back up, commuters were told to take free regular bus and bridging bus services between the affected stops.

The operator also advised passengers to take the Thomson-East Coast Line and the Circle Line.

However, those who spoke to The Straits Times reported confusion on the ground.

Legal secretary Norazlin Omar, 48, was just three stops away from home at Kranji station when the train stopped. According to an announcement, the delay was due to

a passenger who had pressed the emergency button, she said.

As there was no service or staff directing them, passengers got tired of waiting on the stalled train and made their way to the bus stop, she added.

Photos on social media show crowds of commuters at the affected stations and bus stops.

Madam Norazlin said: "The bus stop was so overcrowded. People started to push one another just to board the bus. To make it worse, it was raining heavily."

Others reported snaking queues and long waits for bus services.

Mr Bhagwant Kurade, 50, who works in trading, said he was stuck for almost 1½ hours at Choa Chu Kang station.

"They didn't inform us at Jurong East. They should have informed us to go via the yellow line, but there was no information. We just took the train and got stuck at Choa Chu Kang," he said.

Student care teacher Bella Ravi, 26, was travelling to Woodlands from Clementi.

"If not for the disruptions, I would already be home. It normally would have taken me 30 minutes, but I had to wait for the bus for an hour," she said.

By 8.10pm, regular train services progressively resumed between Choa Chu Kang and Yew Tee stations, according to SMRT.

Singapore has one of the highest occurrences of lightning in the world, earning the Republic its reputation as a lightning capital.

In January, three workers on the roof of a Build-To-Order block in Bartley were taken to hospital after a bolt of lightning struck near them.

Stray streaks of lightning have also resulted in delays after striking trains or trackside equipment in 2016 and 2017.

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Additional reporting by Whitney William

Singapore has one of the highest occurrences of lightning in the world, earning the Republic its reputation as a lightning capital.



The sea of stranded train commuters at Yew Tee station waiting to catch a bus ride following the disruption on June 3. PHOTO: NAW PA ZAW PHAW/FACEBOOK



Above: A notice at Yew Tee station about the disrupted train service. PHOTO: NAW PA ZAW PHAW/FACEBOOK

Left: SMRT said commuters were told to take bridging bus services between affected stops. ST PHOTO: SHINTARO TAY

WORLD

India awaits election outcome as huge vote count begins

Results out on June 4, with PM Modi widely expected to win historic third term

Rohini Mohan
India Correspondent

BENGALURU – It has been over six weeks since the first votes were cast in India’s gargantuan general election, and now the results of the democratic exercise will finally be made public on June 4.

More than 642 million people cast their ballot over seven phases held between April 19 and June 1 for 543 parliamentary constituencies spread across 28 states and eight union territories.

The voter turnout of 66.4 per cent in the 2024 polls is one percentage point lower than in the previous national parliamentary election held in 2019.

Chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar called the feat “a world record” in a press conference on June 3, and asked journalists and officials to join him in giving Indian voters a standing ovation.

Now that the voting is over, a huge process of counting the votes cast will kick off at 8am local time on June 4. With all constituencies expected to start counting simultaneously, results are expected to become clear before dusk in India.

At the start, postal ballots will be counted. After half an hour, the electronic voting machines (EVMs) stored in a strongroom in each of the constituencies will be taken out and unsealed in the presence of representatives from all

participating political parties.

Analysts and exit polls widely expect incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi to win a third term, despite his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government’s unpopularity in some regions due to rising prices and livelihood struggles.

Mr Kumar said there had been less violence, less noise, less clutter and fewer inducements of cash and gifts in the 2024 election because of the Election Commission of India’s (ECI) prompt action.

But among the toughest lessons it had learnt was to “hold elections earlier in the year, not under such heat”, he said.

India reported nearly 25,000 suspected heatstroke cases and 56 deaths due to a heatwave between the months of March and May. Four of the seven election phases were held in May in the hottest northern and western regions, like Delhi and Rajasthan, where temperatures soared to 50 deg C.

At least 30 polling officials reportedly died in the heatwave.

Mr Kumar said the ECI would also “prepare better to deal with mischievous narratives” that sought to create “doubt in the election process”, such as allegations of voter name deletions, EVM tampering and delays in disclosing voter turnout information.

In a sign of fading trust in the ECI due to its muted response or lack of action over religiously incendiary speeches made by politicians and



Election staff in a vote-counting hall in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, during preparations on June 3. More than 642 million people cast their ballot in India’s general election held between April 19 and June 1. The voter turnout of 66.4 per cent is one percentage point lower than in the previous election in 2019. PHOTO: REUTERS

INDIA ELECTION 2024

Follow The Straits Times’ live coverage of the poll results.

Will Prime Minister Narendra Modi head into a third term with a bigger mandate?

Live coverage begins on June 4 at 2.30pm:
str.sg/india2024-live

allegedly irregular disclosure of data, a group of 120 civil society organisations and the opposition parties met in Delhi on May 29 to devise ways to monitor vote counting in the interest of preventing fraud and manipulation.

The participants then wrote to all the polling officers, asking them

to ensure free, fair and accountable counting, amid questions on the “neutrality and fairness of the ECI”.

On June 3, with just 24 hours left for counting to begin, opposition leaders submitted a set of seven demands to the ECI, including live streaming of counting, the presence of representatives of each

candidate at the counting centres, and the counting and declaration of total postal ballots before votes in the EVMs are finalised.

Postal votes have become a point of contention after a few recent instances of the BJP allegedly manipulating these in state elections to influence close contests. Election guidelines from 1961 said the postal ballots were to be counted before EVMs, but in 2019, the ECI allowed EVM counting to begin at any time.

Mr Kumar said the ECI accepted all the demands made by the opposition parties and reassured voters the “counting process is robust”.

A flurry of exit polls released on the evening of June 1 gave Mr Modi’s BJP and its allies a decisive win of between 342 and 400 seats in the Lower House of Parliament – known as the Lok Sabha – but most said the party may not achieve the ambitious goal it had set for the alliance to bag over 400 seats.

Mr Yogendra Yadav, a psephologist-turned-political activist whose insights are respected by journalists and politicians, was among those who predicted that the BJP on its own would fall short of the majority mark of 272 seats in the 543-seat Lok Sabha.

He wrote in The Indian Express on June 1 that unlike in the 2014 and 2019 elections, where there was a wave of support for Mr Modi, the 2024 election showed “the return of normal politics” and that “everyday issues and livelihood concerns could no longer be bottled up”.

But Ms Neerja Chowdhury, a political columnist and the author of How Prime Ministers Decide, told The Straits Times that even though voters in some states like Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Haryana showed disaffection towards the BJP, “by and large, people seemed to be voting for continuity of the Prime Minister”.

“Other than (India’s first prime minister Jawaharlal) Nehru, no other prime minister has won three terms, and that too with an increased majority each time. So, if exit polls are right, it would be historic,” Ms Chowdhury said. “But the flip side of the story is that such concentration of power and a weakened opposition is not good for democracy, as there would be fewer checks and balances.”

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Death toll from India’s heatwaves could be much higher than 56

NEW DELHI – India saw nearly 25,000 cases of suspected heatstroke and 56 people lost their lives after several heatwave days across the country from March to May.

May has been a particularly bad month for the region, with temperatures in the capital Delhi and the nearby state of Rajasthan touching

50 deg C.

In contrast, parts of eastern India have been reeling under the impact of Cyclone Remal. Heavy downpours in the north-eastern state of Assam have killed 14 people since May 28.

In the island nation of Sri Lanka, at least 15 people have died due to

flooding and landslides after heavy monsoon rain lashed the region, said the country’s Disaster Management Centre on June 2.

A confluence of factors has led to a very hot summer in South Asia – a trend scientists say has been worsened by human-driven climate change.

At least 33 people, including polls officials on duty in India’s just-concluded general election, died of suspected heatstroke in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the north, and Odisha in the east on May 31.

Data from the National Centre of Disease Control showed the situa-

tion was the worst in May, with 46 heat-related deaths and 19,189 suspected heatstroke cases, reported news website The Print. Including the suspected cases, the total number of deaths in India could be much higher at 80, The Hindu newspaper reported.

Over 5,000 cases of heatstroke

were detected in the central state of Madhya Pradesh alone.

The weather office has predicted that heatwave conditions will be less severe till June 5 and an early arrival of the monsoon season in the southern state of Kerala last week is expected to bring more relief. REUTERS



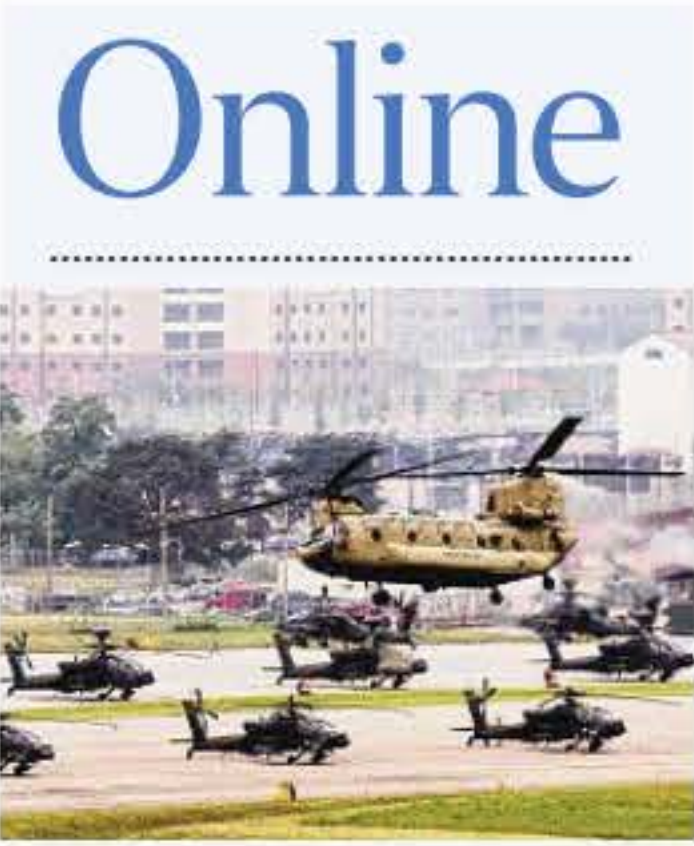
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Online

COMMENTARY
Seoul’s tough choice

For South Korea, Trump-proofing can be risky business. Seoul could rush to lock in terms on US troop presence ahead of the US presidential election. But what if the pre-emptive move annoys Donald Trump, should he make a comeback?

str.sg/risky-business



The encampment at Sydney University is the first in Australia. But it has been followed by similar pro-Palestinian camps on other major campuses such as Melbourne University and Australian National University. ST PHOTOS: JONATHAN PEARLMAN

No big clashes amid Aussie campus protests over Gaza

Rallies against Israel's strikes on Gaza lead to some stand-offs but no major disruptions

Jonathan Pearlman
For The Straits Times

SYDNEY – The lawns outside Sydney University's 19th-century, Gothic-style quadrangle building are typically bustling with students, chatting or resting during breaks between classes.

But since April 23, the lawns have been occupied by rows of tents, alongside Palestinian flags and makeshift signs with slogans such as "Free Gaza", as part of a student protest against Israel's strikes on Gaza.

The encampment – which began as a show of support for similar camps at Columbia University and elsewhere in the US – is the first in Australia. But it was followed by similar pro-Palestinian camps on major campuses such as Melbourne University and Australian National University (ANU).

These have disrupted some campus activities and led to class cancellations at Melbourne University, but have so far not led to the sort of arrests and clashes that have unfolded across the US.

The protesters are urging universities to disclose and end any financial ties to Israel as well as to boycott Israeli institutions and academics over the war in Gaza. They have also made broader demands for universities to disclose and cut ties with weapons manufacturers.

Near the Sydney University camp, Mr Tony Park, a 25-year-old medical student from South Korea, told The Straits Times on May 30 that he had not had any engagement with the protesters and had not been affected by them.

"When I first saw it, I thought there was some kind of student camp going on," he said. "Then I saw there were some protests going on. It doesn't really bother me."

Universities have tended to call for the camps to be disbanded due to concerns about health and safety, but have supported the right to protest peacefully on campus.

Several camps have disbanded after facing warnings of disciplinary action. Others have ended voluntarily. It is believed about five camps remain.

The most recent stand-off was at an encampment at ANU in Canberra, where police ordered protesters to move by May 28, warning that they may face arrest.

University administrators said a recent fire alarm indicated that the protest risked interfering with evacuation procedures and was a safety hazard. As the deadline loomed, the protesters moved to a separate site about 50m away.

A 23-year-old Singaporean student at ANU told ST the protests there initially attracted a lot of attention, but most students have "got used to them being there".

The sociology student, who asked to remain anonymous, said



Medical student Tony Park said he had not had any engagement with the protesters at Sydney University and was not affected by them.

the protesters had not harassed passers-by but did create some unease.

But she added: "There is a level of tension that makes people who walk past feel unsafe. Occasionally there were counter-protests, and it got a little rowdy at times. It was not violent, but it was loud and scary."

The student said she has been in Australia for more than two years but had not previously seen protests such as these, which have continued for weeks in the centre of the university. She said she "chose to stay neutral" on issues such as the Gaza war and the university's dealings with weapons companies.

"It was interesting to see the pro-

tests," she said. "Especially, coming from Singapore, seeing an actual protest is new to me."

Professor Grady Venville, ANU's deputy vice-chancellor, warned on May 31 that protesters will be asked to leave the campus if they disrupt exams, which began on May 30 and continue until June 15.

"These exams represent the culmination of a semester's worth of hard work, study and dedication by ANU students," she said in a statement.

"Our students, staff and community have the right to freely protest... But protest must be safe, appropriate for our campus, and adhere to Australian law."

The most disruptive protest occurred at Melbourne University,

where students occupied a building for about a week in mid-May. The students refused the university's demand to leave, resulting in the cancellation of some classes.

Eventually, the protesters agreed to leave on May 23, after the university said it would make additional disclosures of its research grant arrangements – a move the protesters said was a "major win".

In another concession to protesters, Sydney University on May 28 offered to review its ties to defence companies, though the proposal was reportedly rejected by protesters.

The university's offer was "incredibly inadequate", Mr Deaglan Godwin, a student involved in organising the protests, told The Sydney Morning Herald.

"It does not meet any of our demands, and it's designed to demobilise our movement and bog us down in bureaucracy," he said.

The protests have raised concerns about rising anti-Semitism on campus. Some Jewish students have reportedly avoided attending classes due to the risk of intimidation, harassment and violence.

Education Minister Jason Clare has urged universities to stamp out anti-Semitism and ensure all students and staff are safe.

"People have got a right to protest, but they've got to do it peacefully," he told ABC News on May 15. "There's no place for hate or intimidation or intolerance."

But the opposition has urged the Labor government to denounce the encampments and to condemn concessions made by universities to the protesters.

"The capitulation by the University of Sydney is a shocking decision and will only strengthen the resolve of the activists," said the opposition's education spokeswoman Sarah Henderson on May 28.

For now, it seems, the remaining protests are likely to stay, though most students appear able to go about their studies unaffected.

Near the lawns at Sydney University, Mr Seung Wook Lee, a 21-year-old veterinary science student from South Korea, said the protests "don't really affect me".

He initially said he had not interacted with the protesters, but then corrected himself: "Actually, we had some really good free food that they were offering."

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MUST BE LAWFUL

Our students, staff and community have the right to freely protest... But protest must be safe, appropriate for our campus, and adhere to Australian law.



PROFESSOR GRADY VENVILLE, deputy vice-chancellor of Australian National University.

NO ROOM FOR HATE

People have got a right to protest, but they've got to do it peacefully. There's no place for hate or intimidation or intolerance.



MR JASON CLARE, Education Minister.

NOT BOTHERED

When I first saw it, I thought there was some kind of student camp going on. Then I saw there were some protests going on. It doesn't really bother me.



MR TONY PARK, a 25-year-old medical student from South Korea.

Doubts grow over Gaza truce plan as Israel-Hamas battles rage

RAFAH, Palestinian Territories – Doubts were growing on June 3 about a plan for a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal outlined by US President Joe Biden as heavy fighting raged for a third day since his White House address.

Mr Biden on May 31 presented what he labelled an Israeli three-phase plan that would end the bloody conflict, free all hostages and lead to the reconstruction of the devastated Palestinian territory without Hamas in power.

"The outline that President Biden presented is partial," Israeli government spokesman David Mencer quoted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as saying, adding that "the war will be stopped for the purpose of returning the hostages", after which discussions will follow on how to achieve Israel's goal of eliminating Hamas.

Mr Netanyahu, in a separate statement issued by his office, said "claims that we have agreed to a ceasefire without our conditions

being met are incorrect".

Israeli media questioned to what extent Mr Biden's speech and some crucial details were coordinated with Mr Netanyahu's team, including how long any truce would hold.

Mediators the US, Qatar and Egypt later said they called on both Hamas and Israel to finalise the deal "embodying the principles outlined by President Joe Biden".

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on June 2 said "we have every expectation that if Hamas agrees to the proposal... that Israel would say yes". And Secretary of State Antony Blinken "commended" Israel on the plan in a phone call with war Cabinet member Benny Gantz and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, the State Department said.

But for now, the bombardments and combat showed no sign of easing in the Gaza war, soon entering its ninth month that has devastated the Palestinian coastal territory of 2.4 million people.

On June 3, the Israeli military said its forces had struck "over 50 targets in the Gaza Strip".

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza on June 3 reported at least 40 deaths over the past 24 hours.

The Gaza war was sparked by Hamas' Oct 7 attack, which resulted in the deaths of 1,190 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures. Militants also took about 250 hostages, 120 of whom remain in Gaza, including 37 the army says are dead.

Israel's retaliatory bombardments and ground offensive have killed at least 36,479 people in Gaza, mostly civilians, the enclave's Health Ministry said on June 3.

Heavy fighting has raged, especially in Gaza's far-southern Rafah area near the Egyptian border, where most civilians have again been displaced, said UN agencies.

Air strikes and artillery shelling were reported in Rafah, mainly in the Tal Al-Sultan neighbourhood, as well as in Gaza City, witnesses

told AFP.

The army said: "Troops are continuing intelligence-based targeted operations in the Rafah area."

"Over the past day, the troops conducted scans and located terrorist infrastructure and large quantities of weapons."

Gaza's European hospital said 10 people were killed and several wounded in an Israeli air strike on a house near the main southern city of Khan Younis.

Six people were reported killed in a strike on a family home in the central Bureij refugee camp, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital.

Mr Netanyahu – a hawkish veteran leading a fragile coalition government often described as the most right-wing in Israel's history – is under intense domestic pressure from two sides.

Relatives and supporters of hostages have staged mass protests demanding that he strike a truce deal – but Mr Netanyahu's far-right coalition allies are threatening to bring

down the government if he does.

According to Mr Biden, Israel's three-stage offer would begin with a six-week phase that would see Israeli forces withdraw from all populated areas of Gaza and an initial hostage-prisoner exchange.

Both sides would then negotiate for a lasting ceasefire, with the truce to continue as long as talks are ongoing, Mr Biden said, adding it was "time for this war to end".

Mr Netanyahu took issue with Mr Biden's presentation, insisting that according to the "exact outline proposed by Israel" the transition from one stage to the next was "conditional" and crafted to allow it to maintain its war aims.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, leaders of extreme-right parties, warned they would leave the government if it endorsed the truce proposal.

But opposition leader Yair Lapid, a centrist former premier, said the government "cannot ignore Biden's

important speech" and vowed to back Mr Netanyahu if his far-right coalition partners quit.

Mr Gallant, who has criticised Mr Netanyahu over the lack of a post-war plan for Gaza, said on June 2 that Israel was "assessing a governing alternative" to Hamas to rule the territory after the war ends.

UN and other aid agencies have warned for months of the looming risk of famine in the besieged territory.

At a hospital in Deir al-Balah, 33-year-old Amira al-Taweel said her frail son, suffering from malnutrition, "needs treatment and milk, but there's none available in Gaza".

Israel's seizure in May of the Rafah crossing has further slowed sporadic aid deliveries for Gaza's people and effectively closed its main exit point on the Egyptian border. Cairo refuses to coordinate with Israel humanitarian deliveries through Rafah, but has agreed to send some aid via Israel's Kerem Shalom crossing. AFP

One can dream: Chinese youth snap up lottery scratch cards

Difficult job market, uncertain economic prospects fuel demand



A woman checking the results of her scratch card at a Beijing lottery store. While gambling is illegal in China, state-run lotteries have been permitted since the 1980s, when the government saw these as a tool to fill an urgent need: raising funds for public welfare spending. ST PHOTO: JOYCE ZK LIM

Joyce ZK Lim
China Correspondent

BEIJING – Lottery scratch cards, which offer players a chance to win over one million yuan (\$\$190,000) for a modest outlay, have been selling at record high volumes in China since the Covid-19 pandemic.

They have grown so popular that the state-regulated supply can hardly keep up with demand. Since April, scratch card shortages have made local headlines as lottery stores across the country ran out of stock for days at a time.

“China Red”, “Joyful Encounter” and “Good Luck Tenfold” were among the auspiciously named scratch cards, mostly priced between five yuan and 50 yuan, that have been missing from store shelves.

Fuelling the scratch card boom are young people, who have embraced what is often seen as an older person’s game.

Amid a challenging job market and uncertain economic prospects, Chinese youth have turned to the lottery for some combination of a fun pastime, a respite from the rat race, and even a shot at an overnight windfall.

“Who knows, if you win a big prize you won’t have to work any more,” tech company employee Huang Yuxin, 26, told The Straits Times.

The game is simple and gratification is instant. Players buy a card, scratch off the surface, then follow the written instructions – usually some variation on searching for a specific symbol or number – to determine if they have won something.

Most of the time, they get nothing. In the rarest of cases, they can win upwards of one million yuan.

Winning probabilities and payouts depend on the type of scratch card. In one example, a 30-yuan scratch card leaves players empty-handed 64 per cent of the time, breaking even 25 per cent of the time, winning amounts from 50 yuan to 10,000 yuan with exponentially decreasing odds – and with a one in five million shot of walking home with the top prize of one million yuan.

In 2023, sales of scratch cards, or instant lottery tickets – one of five state-sanctioned lottery types – surged to 119 billion yuan, more than double the amount in 2022. The trend continued into the first quarter of 2024, with sales reaching 39 billion yuan, a 10-year-high, according to figures from China’s Finance Ministry.

Only licensed vendors can sell scratch cards. Apart from lottery shops, the cards can also be found at licensed convenience stores and even some cafes or bubble tea joints capitalising on the lottery’s popularity to attract customers.

Almost 85 per cent of lottery players are 18 to 34 years old, and over 60 per cent have at least an undergraduate degree, according to an October 2023 report by Chinese market research institute Mob.

Administrative manager Wang Bing, 31, who spends 100 yuan on the lottery every two weeks, tells ST that scratching cards with friends is a fun group activity, and that the game is “very de-stressing”.

Freelancer Xu Chenxi, 25, is a self-professed scratch card addict who spends 1,200 yuan to 1,800

yuan on the lottery every week, after getting hooked when he won 700 yuan off one card in March.

Despite making net losses on scratch cards, he told ST the appeal of the game lies in the thrill and anticipation of winning. “You’ll never know, the next card you scratch could win you 100,000 yuan.”

Dr Dan Wang, chief economist at Hang Seng Bank in Shanghai, said: “The lottery is a form of cheap entertainment which satisfies the needs of stressed-out young people in China.”

A contributing factor to this stress is that “the job market for the youth remains harsh, as many companies continue their restructuring this year”, she told ST.

Youth unemployment stood at 14.7 per cent in April – almost thrice the surveyed urban unem-

ployment rate – and is expected to go up as a record 11.79 million college graduates join the workforce in 2024.

Meanwhile, lay-offs and wage cuts across multiple industries, from tech to finance to property, have exacerbated worries about job security.

Mr Xu, the freelancer, concurs. “The economic environment is not good: People can’t find jobs, incomes are not high, and there may be loans to pay off,” he noted. “Young people, who tend to prefer ‘lying flat’, could thus be pinning their get-rich hopes on the lottery instead.”

While gambling is illegal in China, state-run lotteries have been permitted since the 1980s, when the government saw these as a tool to fill an urgent need: raising funds

for public welfare spending.

The country today has two lottery operators – China Welfare Lottery and China Sports Lottery – both of which told local media that the scratch card shortages were the result of sky-high demand that production and supply could not keep up with. The shortages would take some time to ease, they added.

This has left some lottery store owners, whose revenues are a margin of the tickets they sell, high and dry. A store owner in Beijing told ST that since April, he had been receiving only 30 per cent of his usual supply of scratch cards, and expects this to remain the case for the coming months. As a result, his income has taken a huge hit, but he still has to pay rent.

The former salesman in his 50s, who declined to give his name, said he had only just started his business six months ago, after deciding that the booming demand for scratch cards would assure him of a steady income. In hindsight, this was “very unlucky”.

The scratch card shortages have drawn speculation – since refuted by the lottery companies – that the authorities had sought to control the cards’ booming sales.

Dr Wang believes a crackdown is unlikely. By law, 20 per cent of the proceeds from scratch card sales go towards a public welfare fund that finances social projects in areas such as eldercare and child services.

With taxes collected from companies and individuals falling since the start of the year, the government needs new sources of revenue, such as that from fines and lotteries, she said.

Sales of instant lottery tickets surged through the pandemic, reaching a record high



One example of a 30-yuan scratch card. In the top section, the player wins money if he uncovers a dragon symbol (he does not). In the bottom section, the player wins the corresponding amount of money if the numbers “26” and “04” appear (“26” appears twice, so he wins 50 + 50 = 100 yuan). PHOTO: WEI FENG LIN LIN/ XIAOHONGSHU

Hopes high as China’s lunar probe set to begin historic trip back

BEIJING – China’s Chang’e-6 lunar probe looks set to begin its historic journey back to Earth from the Moon’s far side after collecting samples that scientists expect will help answer key questions about the early evolution of the solar system.

Chang’e-6, named after the mythical Chinese Moon goddess, was launched on May 3 from the southern Chinese island province of Hainan.

The fully robotic probe landed on June 2 in a previously unexplored location in a gigantic impact crater called the South-Pole Aitken Basin, on the side of the Moon that permanently faces away from Earth.

China’s previous Chang’e mission collected samples from the Moon’s near side in December 2020, restarting global lunar material retrieval efforts after a gap of 44 years.

The uncrewed Luna 24 mission launched by the former Soviet Union in 1976 collected 170.1g of samples from Mare Crisium, or “Sea of Crises”, on the near side of the Moon.

Between 1969 and 1972, six Apollo missions, all crewed, collected 2,200 samples weighing a total of 382kg, also from the side of the Moon facing Earth.

Dr James Carpenter, head of the European Space Agency’s lunar science office, said the samples collected by the Apollo missions from the Moon’s near side suggested the South-Pole Aitken Basin on the far side was caused by an epoch of extremely heavy bombardment of the solar system, Earth and Moon.

“This is a really core event in the history of the whole solar system, but there is some controversy about whether it happened or not,” he said.

“To understand that, you need to anchor those events, and that’s going to be done with samples from the lunar far side from the South-Pole Aitken Basin.”

After landing, Chang’e-6 had a 14-hour window to drill, excavate and seal 2kg of material, with the goal of being the first probe to bring back such samples from the Moon’s far side. This compares with the 21-hour window Chang’e-5 had in 2020.

“Once it gets dark, once the Sun goes over the horizon, the mission has to end, so there is a limited time window between landing, getting those samples, and getting off the surface again, so it’s quite an exciting mission because it has to be done quickly,” Dr Carpenter said.

While China said it improved the efficiency of its digging and drilling machines compared with 2020, the mission could still encounter snags at the sampling phase.

Chang’e-5 returned 1.73kg of lunar samples, rather than the planned 2kg, as the drill was only able to create a hole 1m deep, rather than 2m, after encountering impenetrable layers beneath the surface.

The Chang’e-6 samples will be transferred and sealed on a rocket booster atop the lander, which will launch back into space, dock with another spacecraft in lunar orbit and transfer the samples.

A landing in China’s Inner Mongolia is expected around June 25.

Throughout the probe’s journey, payloads from Italian, French and Pakistani research institutes, as well as the European Space Agency, will collect data on questions pertaining to space and the Moon, highlighting the growing international weight of China’s space programme, which is competing with the United States to build a lunar outpost in the next decade.

Dr Carpenter said there was “extremely strong” collaboration between European and Chinese scientists in analysing the lunar samples brought back by Chang’e-5, and he hopes this would be repeated for Chang’e-6. REUTERS

Beijing criticises US over support for Philippines

BEIJING – China said the US has played an “extremely dishonourable role” in supporting and cooperating with the Philippines, using issues in the South China Sea to undermine relations between Beijing and the region.

“It is very clear to the discerning eye who the Philippines is serving in its foreign policy and for whom it is working in its maritime operations,” China’s Foreign Ministry said on June 3 in response to recent remarks by Philippine President

Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

China is willing to continue to work with Asean countries, including the Philippines, to manage differences at sea and deepen sea-related cooperation, it said.

Mr Marcos on May 31 denounced illegal, coercive and aggressive actions being taken in disputed waters of the South China Sea.

Speaking at the opening of the Shangri-La Dialogue defence summit in Singapore, Mr Marcos said the Philippines and other South-

east Asian countries have a vision for “peace, stability, and prosperity” in the South China Sea, but that this was being undermined by other actors, without naming China.

“Unfortunately, this vision remains for now a distant reality. Illegal, coercive, aggressive and deceptive actions continue to violate our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction,” Mr Marcos said.

Encounters between the Philippines and China in Asia’s most contested waters have grown more

tense and frequent during the past year, as Beijing presses its claims to shoals in waters that Manila says are well within its exclusive economic zone.

China’s coast guard has stepped up so-called grey-zone activities such as use of water cannon, collisions and ramming tactics to try to stop Philippine resupply and patrol missions. It has also deployed fishing boats that the Philippines and its allies consider militia.

The Philippines, a treaty ally of

the US, is a key focus of Washington’s efforts to strengthen alliances and partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region as it seeks to counter China’s growing military might and influence.

Given its position in the South China Sea and proximity to self-ruled Taiwan, which China claims as its own, Philippine support would be crucial for the US in the event of any conflict. REUTERS, AFP

SEE OPINION • B3

Johor postpones start of trial for QR code clearance at Causeway

JOHOR BAHRU – The proof-of-concept (POC) period for the QR code immigration clearance at Bangunan Sultan Iskandar CIQ (BSI) for users crossing the Causeway is poised to start in two weeks, said Johor state executive councillor Fazli Salleh on June 2.

The Johor works, transportation, infrastructure and communication committee chairman said that for now, the new QR code system is undergoing testing at only the Sultan Abu Bakar Complex CIQ (KSAB) at the Second Link.

“The POC period at the KSAB began as scheduled on Saturday (June 1) and so far, it is running smoothly. During the POC period, we will be testing two mobile apps,” Mr Fazli told reporters on June 2.

“Those travelling through KSAB can use the QR code system through MyTrip, which is embedded in the My-Sejahtera mobile app. At the BSI, the mobile app travellers can use to test out the system is called MyRentas.

“However, MyRentas’ applications are still being developed and are expected to be fully ready within the next two weeks.”

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Fadillah Yusof previously announced that the three-month POC for both BSI and KSAB would begin on June 1, applicable initially to Malaysian motorcycle and bus travellers.

Mr Fazli emphasised the importance of user feedback during the POC period to gauge the effectiveness of MyTrip.

“We need the feedback so that at the end of the POC period, we can determine which application is better. Based on our simulation, the usage of a QR code is five seconds faster compared with autogate usage.”

He added that the MyRentas POC period will take three months and the trial will be conducted in phases involving bus passengers and motorcyclists.

Earlier, The Star reported that the QR code system for Malaysian travellers had seen an encouraging response, with nearly 70,000 people registering to use the system aimed at expediting immigration clearance at the border crossings with Singapore.

Johor Immigration Department acting director Faizal Shamsudin said the substantial registration figure was a very clear indication of travellers’ enthusiasm for testing the new immigration clearance method.

Mr Faizal said MyTrip has been functioning well without major hiccups on the first day of the POC, while similar QR code applications at the BSI had yet to start due to technical glitches.

THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



Travellers using the e-gates at Bangunan Sultan Iskandar CIQ (BSI) as Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Fadillah Yusof (far left) looks on. The proof-of-concept period for the QR code immigration clearance at BSI for users crossing the Causeway is poised to start in two weeks. PHOTO: FADILLAH YUSOF/FACEBOOK

Hong Kong police warn of spike in fake banknotes

About 3,400 counterfeit notes of various denominations seized between January and April

The Hong Kong police have warned the public about counterfeit banknotes amid a sharp rise in fake currency changing hands in the city from January to April.

The police seized 3,396 fake notes of various denominations – with a face value of HK\$2.55 million (S\$440,260) – over the four months, reported the South China Morning Post (SCMP).

This is an increase from the 553 bills, totalling HK\$166,220, seized over the same period in 2023.

The publication reported that three cases of deception involving cryptocurrency transactions accounted for a big portion of counterfeiters in 2024, with the police seizing 1,693 “training notes” and 347 low-quality fake notes.

“Training notes” are said to be used to train bank staff. However, they have no security features and are not genuine currency.

It added that three people were arrested in connection with these cases.

A total of 2,053 forged HK\$1,000 notes have been seized so far in 2024.

Meanwhile, the number of fake HK\$500 notes went up to 919 – more than four times the 177 seized in the first four months of 2023.

Other counterfeit notes included 404 HK\$100 notes, five HK\$50 notes, four HK\$20 notes and 11 HK\$10 notes.

“Most of the seized counterfeit Hong Kong banknotes are of low printing quality,” SCMP quoted a police spokesman as saying.

The police have urged the public to be on the lookout for fake notes and check for security features such as the dynamic shimmering pattern and windowed metallic thread used on genuine Hong Kong

EASY TO TELL DIFFERENCE

Most of the seized counterfeit Hong Kong banknotes are of low printing quality.

“

A HONG KONG POLICE SPOKESMAN, quoted in SCMP.

notes.

The city’s Monetary Authority states that when genuine bills are tilted, the ring in the dynamic shimmering pattern moves correspondingly. The large and small rings on the metallic thread do so as well.

Hong Kong’s currency is also printed with a strong embossed feel, as compared with fake notes which have smooth surfaces.

A police source told SCMP that

the quality of fakes was so poor that people should be able to tell the difference simply by looking at or touching them.

Counterfeiters would usually target convenience stores and taxi drivers to slip the fakes into circulation, he added.

Another source said that the counterfeit situation was not that alarming, as the fakes were a very small percentage of the total volume of genuine notes in circulation.

Citing the Monetary Authority, the publication said there were HK\$614 billion in notes and coins in circulation as at March.

The source believed the quantity of counterfeit notes would decrease as electronic payment methods become more popular, SCMP said.

The production, circulation or passing of counterfeit notes as genuine is punishable by up to 14 years in jail under Hong Kong law.

“On receiving a counterfeit bank-

note, you should immediately hand it over to the police or a bank and do not attempt to reuse it,” the police spokesman said.

SCMP reported that fraudsters have used training notes to swindle people in transactions related to cryptocurrency in recent years.

In a case in July 2023, scammers cheated a female accountant of HK\$1 million in digital currency using fake notes at a fake cryptocurrency shop in Tsim Sha Tsui.

The woman had wanted to exchange her cryptocurrency for cash, and was served by a man who placed a stack of what appeared to be HK\$1,000 notes on the counter.

Following instructions, the woman transferred her Tether digital currency worth HK\$1 million to an e-wallet account.

Once the transfer was completed, the man said he needed to go to the toilet and asked her to wait outside the shop, leaving the stack of cash on the counter.

However, she realised it was a scam when the man did not return and became uncontactable. She subsequently made a police report.

SCMP said it had learnt that the stack of cash had only two real banknotes – at the top and the bottom – with the rest made up of training notes.

A similar case in May 2024 involved a 35-year-old man who was reportedly cheated of HK\$1 million worth of Tether, also at a shop in Tsim Sha Tsui.

HK varsity makes police report over suspected fake student admissions

The University of Hong Kong’s (HKU) business school has made a police report about suspected fraudulent student admissions and warned students not to risk gaining entry through illegal means.

According to the South China Morning Post (SCMP), the report came after an internal investigation by the school.

“After internal investigations, the HKU business school has reported to police suspicious cases regarding the submission of fraudulent documents during the admission process,” the school was quoted as saying on May 31. It gave no further details.

On May 20, a person posted on LIHK, a Hong Kong-based forum website, claiming to be graduating from the university soon. In simplified Chinese, he said the qualifications he submitted for the admission process had recently been checked again by the university.

The student further claimed that an agency had earlier guaranteed an admission offer from the university by using fabricated academic transcripts.

On May 21, the university said it had identified “a small number” of

students who submitted fake documents in their applications.

It added that it would revoke admissions and cancel registrations of students if it found enough evidence of misconduct.

“According to the law, making, using and possessing a false instrument are serious crimes,” HKU said on May 31.

“We urge students and their parents to remain vigilant and abide by the law. It is not worth taking grave risks to gain entry to top academic institutes through illegal means.”

Additionally, the school denounced agencies that claimed to offer “guaranteed admissions”, and those “profiting from fabricating application materials”.

SCMP reported that the incident involved postgraduate students.

The publication quoted a Hong Kong police spokesman as saying that the investigations started after the reports were received, with no arrests made so far.

Screenshots posted on Xiaohongshu – a popular Chinese social media platform – showed the university telling some business students that the academic credentials submitted in their postgraduate ap-

plications were not authentic, SCMP reported on May 31.

HKU also required that the stu-

dents present contracts signed by agencies that helped them prepare and submit their admission applications, so that the school could report them to the police, it added.

HKU, Hong Kong’s oldest tertiary institution, ranks 35th in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings in 2024. It is sixth in the publication’s Asian University Rankings.

Herbs for Healthy Living Health Benefits and Recipes

Date: 22 June to 10 August 2024 (8 Saturdays)
Time: 9:15am to 12:30pm
Medium: English
Course fees: \$580 SkillsFuture credits eligible
Venue: NTU@one-north, LT301
(11 Slims Barracks Rise Singapore 138664)
Main Lecturers: TCM Physician Karen Wee and Soh Shan Bin
Both are licensed physicians and graduates of the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine

This course covers 80 common Chinese herbs/foods, where participants will get to learn their properties and therapeutic functions. Participants will also be taught how to incorporate them into delicious and healthy meals for the maintenance of good health, and resolving mild ailments, for them and their family members.

More info at <http://www.renhai.com.sg>
For enquiries, email: corporate@renhai.com.sg
or call: 6227 9238

Presented by: Renhai 仁海

As part of: Silver ACADEMY

The course fee is inclusive of a book *Chinese Medicine for Health: Holistic Healing, Inner Harmony and Herbal Recipes*.

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Fake news and videos created to undermine Paris Games

Report details Russian propaganda group's efforts to get people to avoid the Olympics

PARIS – With its athletes barred from competing in the Summer Olympics under the country's flag, Russia has turned its fury on the Games and the 2024 host, Paris.

Russian propagandists have created an hour-long documentary, spoofed news reports and even mimicked French and US intelligence agencies to issue fake warnings urging people to avoid the Games, according to a report released on June 2 by Microsoft.

The report details the disinformation campaign created by a group the company calls Storm-1679. The campaign appears to have accelerated since March, flooding social media with short videos raising alarms about possible terrorist attacks and stoking fears about safety.

The operation, while aimed at the Games, is using various techniques to spread disinformation that could also be employed in European and US elections.

US and French officials have tracked the campaign. One US official said Russian disinformation, spread by the Kremlin via social media, continued to threaten the security of the US and its allies.

The group has also tried to goad

fact-checkers into examining its claims, hoping to use the attention to spread the disinformation to new audiences as it is called out.

For months, French officials have focused on the ways Russia could seek to undermine the Games. Hackers affiliated with Russian intelligence disrupted the opening ceremony of the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, and French officials are preparing for more cyber attacks in 2024.

France raised its terrorism warning level after an attack by militant group ISIS in Moscow in March and threats against high-profile soccer matches in Paris. It has also increased security for the Olympics.

Neither French nor US officials are warning people to stay away from the Games, but the Russian disinformation campaign is designed to scare people into doing just that.

Researchers at Microsoft and US government officials have identified a number of groups affiliated with the Kremlin that are spreading disinformation aimed at Europe and the US.

Some are directed by aides to Russian President Vladimir Putin.



Olympic torchbearer Maxime Gohier, a canoe polo athlete, arriving at Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey in Normandy on May 31, ahead of the Paris Games kicking off in July. The disinformation campaign by a group known as Storm-1679 appears to have accelerated since March, flooding social media with short videos raising alarms about possible terrorist attacks and stoking fears about safety. PHOTO: REUTERS

Others are affiliated with Russian intelligence. Some hide behind fake non-profit groups.

Others are veterans of the Internet Research Agency, a St Petersburg troll farm that spread election propaganda in 2016. The agency was run by Mr Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of a mercenary group who led a rebellion against the Kremlin and then was killed in a plane crash in 2023.

Storm-1679 appears separate from those efforts, according to Microsoft. The group's disinformation is aligned with Kremlin propaganda, but few specifics about it are known.

Bellingcat, a research group that uses publicly available data to conduct open source investigations, has been targeted by disinformation videos and has watched the campaign unfold.

Bellingcat founder Eliot Higgins says his group has not established whether Storm-1679 is backed by the Russian government or is independent.

"It could be Prigozhin 2.0 doing work for the Kremlin, or an over-imaginative pro-Russian blogger doing it for kicks; we just don't

know at this point," he said.

The work began in earnest in the summer of 2023 with the release of a fake documentary about the International Olympic Committee, expropriating Netflix's logo and using an artificial-intelligence-powered voice impersonating actor Tom Cruise.

The committee succeeded in having the video – a spoof of the 2013 film Olympus Has Fallen – removed from YouTube.

The attacks have continued, though, with persistent efforts to discredit its leadership, the committee said in March, citing a campaign that used fake recordings of what purported to be telephone calls by officials of the African Union on behalf of Russia.

The Storm-1679 group now appears to be making shorter videos that are easier to create. It used to focus on disparaging Ukrainian refugees in the West, but after French President Emmanuel Macron began to publicly consider sending French troops to Ukraine, it shifted to the Olympics.

Microsoft estimates that Storm-1679 produces three to eight fake videos a week, in English and

French, with many impersonating the BBC, Al Jazeera and other broadcasters.

The group appears to respond quickly to news events, such as protests in New Caledonia, a French territory in the Pacific. Others focus on the prospect of a terrorist attack in Paris.

Most of the videos pretending to be from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and French intelligence are relatively simple. They are unlike anything the CIA has actually produced, but to unsuspecting readers online, they could appear legitimate, using the agency's logo and stark white-on-black typography.

"They are trying to cultivate an anticipation of violence," Mr Clint Watts, head of Microsoft's Digital Threat Analysis Centre, said of the group behind the fake posts. "They want people to be fearful of going to the Olympics."

A CIA spokesperson said a video that circulated online in February purporting to be a warning from the agency about terrorist attacks during the Games was a fabrication.

In February, Viginum, the government agency in France that com-

bats disinformation online, identified the fake CIA video as part of a campaign it called Matryoshka, after the nesting dolls that are popular in Russia.

The campaign was also responsible for fake videos about the domestic French intelligence agency.

A person briefed on the French investigation, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence assessments, said Viginum and the French Foreign Ministry were quickly identifying the Russian disinformation from the group aimed at undermining the Olympics.

French officials and Microsoft say one of the group's tactics appears to be trying to get the attention of fact-checking organisations.

Mr Watts said: "Normally, when Storm-1679 posts content on Telegram, it circulates there for a day or two and then goes away."

"The content doesn't normally travel from one platform to another, but when its false content is fact-checked by accounts with a large following, the content gets far more views and in front of new and different audiences."

NYTIMES

S. Korea plans to suspend military pact with North over trash balloons

SEOUL – South Korea plans to suspend a military agreement signed with North Korea in 2018 aimed at easing tensions, the presidential office said on June 3, after Seoul warned of a strong response to balloons launched by Pyongyang carrying trash to the South.

North Korea has launched hundreds of balloons carried by wind across the border that dropped trash throughout South Korea, which called it a provocation and rejected Pyongyang's claim that it was done to inconvenience its neighbour.

South Korea's National Security Council said it would raise the plan to suspend the entirety of the military agreement for approval by the Cabinet at a meeting on June 3.

Suspending the agreement will pave the way for the South to conduct training near the military border and take "sufficient and immediate measures" in response to North Korea's provocation, the council said in a statement.

It did not elaborate on what those measures may be.

The military agreement, which was the most substantive deal to come out of months of historic summit meetings between the two Koreas in 2018, had been all but scrapped when Pyongyang de-

clared in 2023 that it was no longer bound by it.

Since then, the North has deployed troops and weapons at guard posts near the military border.

By continuing to comply with the pact, "there have been considerable problems in our military's readiness posture", the council said.

South Korea has previously said it would take "unendurable" measures against North Korea for sending the trash balloons over the border, which could include blaring propaganda from loudspeakers positioned at the border directed at the North.

North Korea has said its balloons were in retaliation for a propaganda campaign by North Korean defectors and activists in South Korea, who regularly send inflatables containing anti-Pyongyang leaflets, food, medicine, money and USB sticks loaded with K-pop music videos and dramas across the border.

North Korea has reacted angrily to the campaign because it is worried about the potential impact of the materials on the psychology of the people who read or listen to them and on the state's control of the public, experts said.

REUTERS



The presidential palace and ceremonial plaza under construction in Nusantara, East Kalimantan. The head and deputy head of the body overseeing Indonesia's planned new capital have unexpectedly resigned. PHOTO: INDONESIA PUBLIC WORKS AND HOUSING MINISTRY

hajeo, an architect and former real estate developer, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Indonesian government has been racing to build the infrastructure required for the relocation of the first batch of 12,000 civil servants this September.

But the plan has been twice delayed and the resignations come amid a lack of private funding for Mr Widodo's signature project.

"These resignations will make people question the project," said Mr Arya Fernandes, from Indonesia's Centre for Strategic and International Studies. "The question is how to convince investors that there is no problem."

One of the stumbling blocks has been about the status of land ownership in the new capital site, Indonesian Public Works Minister Basuki Hadimuljono said during a news conference on June 3.

"We will soon decide on the status of the land," he said. "Whether we sell it, rent it or if there will be cooperation between government and companies. We will speed it up so that investors won't have any doubts."

Mr Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi, plans to visit Nusantara on June 4 to inaugurate several projects, including schools, while celebrations for Indonesia's Independence Day are planned there on Aug 17.

He will step down in October after serving the maximum two terms in office. Indonesian President-elect Prabowo Subianto, who is closely aligned with Mr Widodo, has pledged to continue developing the new capital. REUTERS

Questions swirl over Indonesia's planned new capital after resignations

JAKARTA – The head and deputy head of the body overseeing Indonesia's planned new capital have unexpectedly resigned, raising questions about the US\$32 billion (\$43 billion) project.

With Jakarta, the current capital of 10 million, overcrowded and plagued by massive traffic jams as well as chronic flooding and sink-

ing land, Indonesia is building a new capital, called Nusantara, in the jungles of East Kalimantan on Borneo – an island shared with Malaysia.

"(President Joko Widodo) has appointed the public works and housing minister and deputy agrarian minister as the acting head and deputy head," Indone-

sian State Secretariat Minister Pratikno said on June 3.

He said the appointments would speed up construction and the resignations had long been discussed.

Mr Bambang Susantono, a former official at the Asian Development Bank who was heading the project, and his deputy Dhony Ra-

UN forecasts La Nina could help lower temperatures in 2024

GENEVA – The return of the cooling La Nina weather phenomenon in 2024 should help lower temperatures somewhat after months of global heat records, the United Nations' weather agency said on June 3.

The impact is likely to be felt in the next few months because the warming El Nino weather pattern – which has helped fuel a spike in global temperatures and extreme weather around the world since mid-2023 – "is showing signs of ending", the UN's World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said in its latest update.

But the WMO warned that global temperatures would continue to rise in the long term due to human-induced climate change, which continues to make extreme weather worse and upend seasonal rainfall and temperature patterns.

La Nina refers to the cooling of the ocean surface temperatures in large swathes of the tropical Pacific Ocean, coupled with winds, rains and changes in atmospheric pressure.

In many locations, especially in the tropics, La Nina produces the opposite climate impacts to El Nino, which heats up the surface of

the oceans, leading to drought in some parts of the world and triggering heavy downpours elsewhere.

The WMO said there was a "60 per cent" chance of La Nina conditions in the period from July to September and a "70 per cent" likelihood during August to November.

The chances of El Nino redeveloping are negligible, it added.

Every month since June 2023, when El Nino returned, has set a new high temperature record, and 2023 was by far the warmest year on record globally.

The WMO said the planet would continue to heat up overall from the use of fossil fuels that produce greenhouse gases.

"The end of El Nino does not mean a pause in long-term climate change, as our planet will continue to warm due to heat-trapping greenhouse gases," WMO deputy secretary-general Ko Barrett stressed.

"Exceptionally high sea surface temperatures will continue to play an important role during (the) next months."

Much of the planet's excess heat from climate change is stored in

the oceans.

In the US, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has already factored the expected La Nina into its forecasts for 2024's Atlantic hurricane season.

The NOAA said it expected four to seven major hurricanes in the Atlantic between June and November.

"The upcoming Atlantic hurricane season is expected to have above-normal activity due to a confluence of factors, including near-record warm ocean temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean, devel-

opment of La Nina conditions in the Pacific, reduced Atlantic trade winds and less wind shear," it said on May 23.

The WMO noted that the past nine years had been the warmest on record, even with the cooling influence of a La Nina event that lasted from 2020 to early 2023.

The latest El Nino, which peaked in December, was one of the five strongest on record.

Ms Barrett said: "Our weather will continue to be more extreme because of the extra heat and moisture in our atmosphere."

The WMO has made it a priority to ensure that all regions of the world are covered by early warning systems by 2027, particularly the least well equipped, such as Africa. AFP



Ms Claudia Sheinbaum celebrating her win in Mexico City on June 3. She will become Mexico's first female president, inheriting the project of her mentor and outgoing leader Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador whose popularity among the poor helped drive her triumph. Her path ahead will be complicated. She has promised to increase popular welfare policies while inheriting a hefty budget deficit and low economic growth. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Sheinbaum scores landslide win to be Mexico's first woman president

Victory is major step for country known for macho culture and traditional values

MEXICO CITY – Ms Claudia Sheinbaum won a landslide victory to become Mexico's first female president, inheriting the project of her mentor and outgoing leader Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador whose popularity among the poor helped drive her triumph.

Ms Sheinbaum, a climate scientist and former mayor of Mexico City, won the presidency with between 58.3 per cent and 60.7 per cent of the vote, according to a rapid sample count by Mexico's electoral authority. That is set to be the highest vote tally percentage in Mexico's democratic history.

The ruling coalition was also on track for a possible two-thirds super majority in both Houses of Congress, which would allow the coalition to pass constitutional reforms without opposition support, ac-

ording to the range of results given by the electoral authority.

Opposition candidate Xochitl Galvez took between 26.6 per cent and 28.6 per cent of the vote, preliminary results show, and Ms Sheinbaum said Ms Galvez had called her to concede defeat.

"For the first time in the 200 years of the republic, I will become the first woman president of Mexico," Ms Sheinbaum told supporters to cheers of "president, president".

Victory for Ms Sheinbaum is a major step for Mexico, a country known for its macho culture and home to the world's second-biggest Roman Catholic population, which for years pushed more traditional values and roles for women.

"I never imagined that one day I would vote for a woman," said 87-year-old Edelmira Montiel, a Shein-

baum supporter in Mexico's smallest state Tlaxcala.

"Before we couldn't even vote, and when you could, it was to vote for the person your husband told you to vote for. Thank God that has changed and I get to live it," the voter added.

Ms Sheinbaum has a complicated path ahead. She has promised to increase popular welfare policies while inheriting a hefty budget deficit and low economic growth.

After preliminary results were announced, she told supporters her government would be fiscally responsible and respect the autonomy of the central bank.

She has vowed to improve security but has given few details and the election, the most violent in Mexico's modern history with 38 candidates murdered, has reinforced massive security problems. Many analysts say organised crime groups expanded and deepened their influence during Mr Lopez Obrador's term.

The vote on June 2 was also marred by the killing of two people at polling stations in Puebla state. More people have been killed – over 185,000 – during the mandate of Mr Lopez Obrador than during any other administration in Mexico's modern history, although the homicide rate has been inching down.

"Unless she commits to making a game-changing level of investment in improving policing and reducing impunity, Ms Sheinbaum will likely struggle to achieve a significant improvement in overall levels of security," said Mr Nathaniel Parish Flannery, an independent Latin America political risk analyst.

The ruling Morena party also won the Mexico City mayorship race, one of the country's most important posts, according to preliminary results.

Among the new Mexican president's challenges will be tense negotiations with the United States over the huge flows of US-bound migrants crossing Mexico and se-

curity cooperation over drug trafficking at a time when the US fentanyl epidemic rages.

Mexican officials expect these negotiations to be more difficult if the US presidency is won by Donald Trump in November. Trump has vowed to impose 100 per cent tariffs on Chinese cars made in Mexico and said he would mobilise special forces to fight the cartels.

At home, the next Mexican president will be tasked with addressing electricity and water shortages, and luring manufacturers to relocate as part of the nearshoring trend, in which companies move supply chains closer to their main markets.

Ms Sheinbaum will also have to wrestle with what to do with Pemex, the state oil giant that has seen production decline for two decades and is drowning in debt.

"It cannot just be that there is an endless pit where you put public money in and the company is never profitable," said Mr Alberto Ramos, chief Latin America economist at

Goldman Sachs. "They have to rethink the business model of Pemex."

Mr Lopez Obrador doubled the minimum wage, reduced poverty and oversaw a strengthening peso and low levels of unemployment – successes that made him incredibly popular.

Ms Sheinbaum has promised to expand welfare programmes, but it will not be easy with Mexico on track for a large deficit in 2024 and sluggish GDP growth of just 1.5 per cent expected by the Mexican central bank in 2025.

Mr Lopez Obrador has loomed over the campaign, seeking to turn the vote into a referendum on his political agenda. Ms Sheinbaum has rejected opposition claims that she would be a "puppet" of Mr Lopez Obrador, though she has pledged to continue many of his policies including those that have helped Mexico's poorest.

In her victory speech, Ms Sheinbaum thanked Mr Lopez Obrador as "a unique person who has transformed our country for the better".

Political analyst Viri Rios said she thought sexism was behind the criticism that Ms Sheinbaum was going to be a puppet of the outgoing leader.

"It's unbelievable that people cannot believe she's going to be making her own decisions, and I think that's got a lot to do with the fact that she's female," she said.

REUTERS

Trump warns of 'breaking point' for Americans if he is jailed

WASHINGTON – Former US president Donald Trump said on June 2 that he would accept home confinement or jail time after his historic conviction on criminal charges by a New York jury last week, but that it would be tough for the public to accept.

Trump is scheduled to be sentenced on July 11, four days before Republicans gather to formally choose their presidential nominee to face Democratic President Joe Biden in November's election.

Prison time is rare for people convicted in New York state of felony falsification of business records, the charge Trump faced at his trial. The maximum sentence for such a charge is four years in prison.

"I'm not sure the public would stand for it," the Republican presidential candidate told Fox News of a potential prison sentence.

"I think it'd be tough for the public to take. You know, at a certain point, there's a breaking point."

Trump has vowed to appeal against his conviction by the New York jury, which found him guilty of 34 felony counts over falsifying documents to cover up a payment to silence a porn star ahead of the 2016 election.

To succeed on appeal, Trump, 77, must demonstrate that Justice Juan Merchan made significant errors overseeing the trial.

His lawyers have said they ex-



Former US president Donald Trump says he would accept home confinement or jail time after his historic conviction on criminal charges, but that it would be tough for the public to accept. PHOTO: NYTIMES

pect to take the case to the Supreme Court. On June 2, Trump, who tried to disqualify Justice Merchan from the case, repeated allegations of bias by the judge and the district attorney who prosecuted the case.

"The United States Supreme Court MUST DECIDE!" Trump wrote on social media.

He plans to appeal after his July 11 sentencing date, his lawyers say. If an appeal in New York state courts proves unsuccessful, he could appeal to the Supreme Court. Trump's attorneys would have to persuade at least four of the court's nine justices to hear his case.

To prevail, Trump would then have to demonstrate that the state prosecution violated his federal constitutional rights and that his legal team followed proper procedures during earlier stages of his

legal proceedings.

Trump has urged his conviction to step up his fund-raising efforts but has not otherwise sought to mobilise his supporters, in contrast to his comments protesting against his 2020 loss to Mr Biden that were followed by a deadly attack by his supporters on the US Capitol on Jan 6, 2021.

Asked what Trump supporters should do if he were jailed, Republican National Committee co-chair Lara Trump told CNN: "Well, they're gonna do what they've done from the beginning, which is remain calm and protest at the ballot box on November 5th. There's nothing to do other than make your voices heard loud and clear and speak out against this."

Some Trump supporters have hung US flags upside down after the verdict. The inverted flag has

been a symbol of distress or protest in the US for over 200 years.

At least one Democratic lawmaker expressed concern about the potential for Trump's supporters to respond violently to his conviction.

"His base listens to him. They don't listen to Lara Trump. And this is another dangerous appeal to violence," Democratic US Representative Adam Schiff told CNN. But US House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Trump ally, said any response must be lawful.

"We are the rule of law party – chaos is not a conservative value. We have to fight back and we will with everything in our arsenal. But we do that within the confines of the rule of law," Mr Johnson told Fox News Sunday.

The matter is unlikely to be resolved before the November presidential election, when Trump will seek to take back the White House from Mr Biden. Opinion polls show a close race between the two men and suggest that Trump's conviction could hurt him with some Republican voters and independents.

Trump still faces three other criminal cases, including two over alleged efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss, although they are not likely to come to trial or conclude before November's vote. He denies wrongdoing in all the cases and has called the charges a Democratic conspiracy to prevent him from competing.

Mr Biden has sought to defend the nation's justice system, saying it is "reckless" and "dangerous" to call the verdict "rigged". The US Justice Department denies any political interference. REUTERS

British opposition leader seeks to reassure voters on national security

LONDON – British opposition leader Keir Starmer pledged on June 3 to secure the country's nuclear deterrent, trying to reassure voters before an election that the nation would be safe in the hands of a Labour government.

Describing Labour as the "party of national security", Mr Starmer turned his campaign focus to defence, seen as a weak spot for Britain's main opposition party under his predecessor Jeremy Corbyn, a long-time supporter of nuclear disarmament.

With conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, defence is taking centre stage before the July 4 election.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said in May that only his Conservative Party could keep voters safe in an increasingly dangerous world.

Standing in front of 14 former military Labour candidates, Mr Starmer told an audience: "The people of Britain need to know that their leaders will keep them safe – and we will."

"This Labour Party is totally committed to the security of our nation, to our armed forces and, importantly, to our nuclear deterrent."

He made a commitment to a so-called "nuclear deterrent triple lock" – constructing four new nuclear submarines, maintaining a continuous at-sea deterrent and the delivery of all future upgrades needed for those submarines.

Even though Labour is far ahead in the polls, officials say they still need to convince thousands of undecided voters to back what Mr Starmer repeatedly calls a "changed party", one which can be trusted on defence, health and tackling immigration.

The Conservatives believe they have a stronger defence offering, with a pledge to increase defence spending to 2.5 per cent of gross domestic product a year by 2030 – a target Labour says it wants to match "as soon as possible".

REUTERS



Labour leader Keir Starmer says the opposition party is totally committed to the security of Britain, its armed forces and nuclear deterrent.

SINGAPORE

Google’s infrastructure investment here hits \$6.7b with new data centre

This is up from \$1.1b in 2022 when its third data centre here was launched

Zhaki Abdullah

Google has increased its investment in infrastructure in Singapore to US\$5 billion (\$6.7 billion) with the completion of its fourth data centre here.

This is up from US\$850 million (\$1.1 billion) in 2022 when its third data centre in the Republic was launched.

This was announced on June 3 during an event at Google’s office in Mapletree Business City II in Pasir Panjang.

More than 500 people now work in Google data centres in Singapore, the tech giant said, noting that such centres power its popular digital services such as its search engine and Google Maps.

The specifications of the new facility were not provided.

Singapore is one of 11 countries where Google currently operates data centres, with the company’s first data centre here launched in 2014 and its second coming online in 2015. Its data centres here are all located in Jurong West.

On May 30, Google said it would invest US\$2 billion in Malaysia to develop its first data centre there.

Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information Janil Puthucheary noted an increasing number of data centres are required to support the computing power capacity essential for tech-



Dr Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information, speaking at an event at Google’s office in Mapletree Business City II in Pasir Panjang on June 3.
ST PHOTO: HESTER TAN

nological needs, such as the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous systems.

“But with our energy and carbon constraints, this growth of capacity can only be realised if we can make the data centres more sustainable,” said Dr Janil, who attended the event on June 3.

“We are committed to growing the (data centre) sector to be more sustainable,” he said, pointing to the launch of the country’s Green Data Centre Roadmap on May 30. Launched by Deputy Prime Min-

NEED FOR SUSTAINABILITY

With our energy and carbon constraints, this growth of capacity can only be realised if we can make the data centres more sustainable.



DR JANIL PUTHUCHEARY, Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information, on the need for an increasing number of data centres to support the computing power capacity essential for technological needs, such as the growing use of artificial intelligence and autonomous systems.

ister Heng Swee Keat at the Asia Tech x Singapore event, the new road map includes plans to add 300MW of data centre capacity here in the coming years, with another 200MW allocated only for operators using green energy options.

Green standards outlined in the road map include ways to improve energy efficiency by upgrading equipment, in addition to reducing the energy required for air-conditioning by safely raising the operating temperature to 26 deg C.

Singapore has more than 70 data centres, with 1.4 gigawatts of capacity.

These currently account for 82 per cent of Singapore’s information and communications sector emissions, and 7 per cent of its total electricity consumption.

In a statement, Google said its data centres are equipped with sustainability features to ensure efficient resource management.

These are especially necessary in Singapore, where cooling measures have to be carefully regulated to avoid energy waste and erosion of data centre efficiency, it noted.

Mr Ken Siah, the Asia-Pacific head of public affairs for Google data centres, said innovations in areas such as facility design and hardware have allowed for the creation of supercomputers, which can operate at higher temperatures, thus requiring less energy for cooling.

“The average temperature in our data centres is about 27 deg C. It can in fact go higher, but we keep it at that level for the comfort of the humans working in there,” he said during the event.

Mr Siah noted that recycled water is also used to cool Google’s data centres here because of Singapore’s hot weather – a move that reduces carbon emissions by 10 per cent compared with air cooling.

The recycled water is also reused for cooling multiple times, thus minimising the centres’ water intake.

The data centres also use light rather than electricity for networking, Mr Siah said.

Using this method, optical circuit switches employ tiny rotatable mirrors to beam data from input ports to output ports.

This method of data transmission allows Google to cut its energy consumption by up to 40 per cent compared with traditional electrical networking, he added.

“Our experience is that by working together with the ecosystem, using human ingenuity and technological innovation, data centres can grow sustainably to meet the needs of AI, even here at the equator,” said Mr Siah.

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Science Centre cancels talk on sex and gender differences following backlash

Sherlyn Sim

Science Centre Singapore has cancelled an event organised to discuss the differences between sex and gender following a backlash from the public.

In a Facebook post on June 2, the centre said the June 14 event, which cost \$20 per person and was to have included a buffet dinner, would no longer proceed and apologised for the inconvenience.

Ticket holders to the event, which was supposed to be held at Cineleisure, will get a refund, added the Science Centre.

According to the post, the event,

only for those aged 18 and above, aimed to explore the biological, psychological and cultural influences that shape the understanding of gender and sex.

By the afternoon of June 3, the Facebook post had drawn 145 comments. There were another 352 comments on a Reddit thread.

There were mixed reactions to the issue, with those on Facebook mostly critical of the Science Centre’s decision to organise the talk while those on Reddit did not see an issue with the event, given that the target audience was aged 18 and above.

“Thank you to everyone who have provided us with your feedback about this discussion ses-

sion. The Science Centre team would like to take the opportunity to review our approach to this session,” the Facebook post said.

A Science Centre spokesperson told The Straits Times that the institution had reviewed the event before cancelling it.

“Our Science Cafe session in June was intended to discuss the sociocultural factors that shape society’s understanding of sex and gender,” the spokesperson said.

“Following online publicity of the session, we had received public feedback expressing concern about the content to be discussed in the session, as well as the composition of the speakers.”

According to the Facebook post, the event’s speakers comprised National University of Singapore Associate Professor Mie Hiramoto, youth counsellor Alexander Teh and local drag queen Becca D’Bus, whose real name is Eugene Tan.

Dr Hiramoto, whose research interests are gender and sexuality, was to present insights from science and culture in redefining gender and sexuality, while the counsellor was to talk about the differences in sex and gender.

The counsellor is a gay trans man, according to Oogachaga, a non-profit professional organisation working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals.

The drag queen had planned to discuss popular definitions and misconceptions of drag.

Becca D’Bus said: “The context of the event, an 18+ casual, social time, is a refreshing way to engage in thinking.

“I would have looked at drag across all gender presentations, masculine, feminine, and the vast space in between and outside of it, to consider, perhaps less the misconceptions about drag queens, but perhaps what else we don’t talk about or think about enough.”

Oogachaga executive director Leow Yangfa said the group “is very dismayed and disappointed that the Science Centre has cancelled an event that had been planned since late last year.”

Ms Carol Loi, a mother of two children aged 19 and 22, said she had found the event inappropriate, given its speaker line-up.

The educational consultant, 53, said: “The topic is useful for discussion, just that it is not representative of good science. A better mix of panellists would show professionalism and wisdom of the Science Centre I know and respect.”

Others welcomed the talk.

Writer Ng Yi-Sheng, 43, said he

would have attended the event if it had not been cancelled. He was intrigued by the discussion topics, which he felt were relevant to what society expects of people and what they can expect medically about their bodies.

“For an institution with public trust like the Science Centre to lend its perspectives to the topic, with trans people as part of the discussion, is really important from the perspective of inclusion and equality,” he added.

The Science Centre said it organises ticketed dinner events under its Science Cafe event series. The series, which is for those aged 18 and above, promotes interest in science and curiosity.

Past sessions have examined topics such as the development of mRNA vaccines during the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of artificial intelligence on artistic developments.

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Tingkat and catering • Firms say they have strict food quality standards | A14

Biomedical engineering innovator • NUS professor elected Fellow of the Royal Society | A15



Online

VIDEO
Roses from Turkey

For the first time, damask roses – one of the oldest flowers in history – are part of Gardens by the Bay’s Rose Romance floral display from June 2 to 30. Find out more about the exhibition and Turkey’s romance with roses.

str.sg/rose-romance



Above: The division's commander, Assistant Commissioner of Police Serene Chiu.

Right: Assistant Superintendent Andrew Koh and his team's role in the rescue of an abused teenager helped Clementi Police Division secure the Best Land Division title for the 12th time. PHOTOS: HESTER TAN, LIANHE ZAOBAO



Cops who played role in finding abused teen help Clementi division snag record win

Kyleen Cabael

All the police officers had to go on in 2022 was an online post of a teenage boy, who has low IQ, being held and abused in a hotel room.

His younger sister had called the police on Jan 25 that year after seeing a photo on social media of her brother, then 19, being assaulted.

Assistant Superintendent Andrew Koh and his team from Clementi Police Division were among the 50-plus officers who worked overnight, canvassing more than 10 hotels near the teen's last known location to find and rescue him.

ASP Koh said he remembers how stressful it was in their race against time to find the youth, whose sister told the police he had not been home for two weeks.

"I felt a sense of pressure. We were not sure if the person was

still alive," he told The Straits Times.

"We will never know until we exhaust the leads. Each hotel checked and cleared meant we were one step closer to saving the victim," added ASP Koh, who was attached to Clementi from 2020 to early 2023. He was posted to Jurong Police Division in April 2023.

The victim was found at the Arton Boutique Hotel in Lavender on Jan 26, 2022, in critical condition, having suffered chemical and cigarette butt burns, fractures and extensive head injuries.

The police arrested a 21-year-old man, a woman, 20, and two girls, aged 16. During their trials, they claimed he had made sexual advances on one of the girls.

From Jan 17 to 26, he had been scalded by boiling water, slapped, punched and kicked, and had his arms cut with a razor blade. His captors also made him drink urine, contaminated his Milo drink with faeces, and added baby powder and perfume to his nasi

lemak.

Clementi Police Division's role in this case contributed to it being named Best Land Division – its third win in a row – at the Police Day Parade on June 3, 2024.

This is the 12th time it has been named Best Land Division, holding the title for four years straight from 2001 to 2004 – setting a record for both achievements.

Its commander, Assistant Commissioner of Police Serene Chiu, received the award from Senior Minister Teo Chee Hean at the Home Team Academy on June 3.

The division, which has around 650 officers, is responsible for 390,000 residents, including those on Sentosa and Jurong Island. It also safeguards VivoCity, the largest shopping mall in Singapore, dormitories and estates like Redhill and Jurong East.

AC Chiu said: "Winning the Best Land Division for the third consecutive year is a testament to the steadfast dedication, consistent operational excellence and profes-

sionalism of our officers in Clementi Police Division."

On Aug 9, 2023, her officers raided a hotel villa on Sentosa, where a suspected drug party was being held.

They arrested 49 men, aged between 21 and 46, and seized drugs such as ecstasy and ketamine, and drug paraphernalia. The raid took place even as the division's officers were deployed at the National Day Parade at the Padang.

"We were able to handle both things by having strong teamwork and resilience," said AC Chiu.

SM Teo said: "Our police officers work tirelessly to keep Singapore safe and secure, continually adapting to technological advances and the evolving security landscape. On this Police Day, let us honour the contributions and sacrifices of all police officers, recognise their commitment and dedication, and thank them for their service to the nation."

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Rental application for over 190 gardening plots now open

Rhea Yasmine

Those with green thumbs can look forward to booking their own gardening plots, with more than 190 spots put up for rental across Singapore.

The National Parks Board (NParks) said online applications opened at 10am on June 3 and will close at 11.59pm on June 16.

All upcoming plots, which consist of a raised planter bed measuring 2.5m by 1m, soil and a mini

storage area for tools, will be located at existing allotment gardens.

They comprise 13 plots at Aljunied Park, 15 plots at Choa Chu Kang Park, 43 plots at Pasir Ris Park, 73 plots at Sengkang Riverside Park, and 50 plots at Yishun Park.

Of these 194 plots, 76 are new plots that can be found at Pasir Ris Park, Sengkang Riverside Park and Yishun Park.

One plot costs \$57 a year excluding goods and services tax, for a period of up to three years.

Each household is allowed to

apply for a plot at any one location at a time. Those interested can apply and ballot for a plot via three AXS channels, namely the e-Station website, the m-Station mobile app or the physical AXS Station kiosks.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via e-mail at the end of the balloting process, about three months from the closing date.

The Allotment Gardening Scheme was launched in 2016 to create space for those interested in growing edible produce.

More than 2,400 allotment gar-

den plots have been introduced in 28 parks and gardens in Singapore to date. In addition to these, 900 plots across 29 locations are managed by residents' committees and residents' networks.

"We are working to progressively introduce even more plots across Singapore," said NParks, adding that it has been working with agencies, town councils and grassroots organisations to implement allotment gardens in the heartland since 2021.

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Browse and borrow library books at new self-service kiosk at Bukit Batok's West Mall

Therese Soh

Residents in Bukit Batok who miss their public library, which is closed for upgrading, can now browse up to 750 books at a new self-service kiosk at West Mall before deciding what to borrow.

A pilot initiative launched on June 3, Browse-n-Borrow lets users leaf through physical copies of books, in addition to browsing them on an electronic catalogue.

Alongside the kiosk, on the second storey of West Mall near the escalator, are reservation lockers where library patrons can collect reserved books, while a nearby "wallpaper library" lets users scan QR codes to access curated library resources.

The Bukit Batok Public Library – which is on the third level of the mall – has been undergoing renovations since it closed in December

2023, and the revamped library is set to reopen by the end of 2025 at twice its previous size.

Browse-n-Borrow was rolled out following feedback from users about the Book Dispenser, a 24-hour self-checkout book vending machine at Marine Parade Public Library, said the National Library Board's (NLB) deputy director for planning and development, Mr Winston Tan, 42.

The Book Dispenser lets users view and select books from an electronic catalogue before dispensing them, but some users said not being able to browse a physical copy before borrowing meant that they sometimes ended up borrowing books they were not interested in.

These users said they preferred visiting libraries, where they can physically leaf through books, Mr Tan added.

To "emulate a library experience", Browse-n-Borrow lets users



Bukit Batok residents can now browse up to 750 books at a new self-service kiosk at West Mall before deciding what to borrow. The pilot initiative – Browse-n-Borrow – was launched on June 3 as a service to residents while the Bukit Batok Public Library undergoes renovations. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

browse books physically and return them to their shelves if they decide not to borrow them afterwards, he said.

Users select the book they wish to browse or borrow from an electronic catalogue after scanning the

QR code on their NLB mobile app or their library card.

The door of the shelf containing the book will swing open, and the user has two minutes to decide. Users will hear a reminder alarm at the one-minute mark, and when

EVCo's electric vans and leasing contracts sold as part of liquidation

Creditors will have to wait longer before they can be paid as process has not ended

Lee Nian Tjoe
Senior Transport Correspondent

EVCo, the electric van leasing company that went into liquidation in March, has been sold for an undisclosed sum to Pan Pacific Leasing Group.

Pan Pacific Leasing, a commercial vehicle leasing company, completed the deal on June 3 to take over EVCo's fleet of 529 electric vehicles (EVs) and existing leasing contracts. But EVCo's creditors have to wait longer before they can be paid, as the liquidation process has not ended.

EVCo, also known as Strides DST, was incorporated in March 2022 with a paid-up capital of \$10 million. It was 60 per cent owned by transport operator SMRT's business arm Strides Holdings and 40 per cent by Dishangtie Green Technology (Hong Kong).

In a statement, SMRT's Strides Digital said it will be working with Pan Pacific Leasing to provide digital fleet management services for the EVs that were previously from EVCo and for future projects.

A spokesman for Pan Pacific Leasing said the service includes software to help business owners know the environmental impact of using EVs compared with conventional internal combustion engine vehicles, in terms of carbon emissions.

Baker Tilly, the appointed liquidator, said the sale of EVCo's vehicles is not the end of the liquidation process as there are "further assets and claims to be realised".

Mr Timothy Reid, a principal at the accountancy and business advisory firm, said the total amount due to creditors has not been confirmed.

"Creditors need to file claims, and these need to be adjudicated before any interim distribution can be made," he said.

Mr Reid declined to comment when asked to elaborate on the number of creditors or sums owed.

The Straits Times had reported that as at Feb 28, EVCo has 28 creditors with \$49.4 million due to them. It is not known if more creditors have come forward since then.

EVCo was declared insolvent several months after its chief executive Fuji Foo and former chief financial officer Janice Low were arrested in connection with a police investigation in late 2023.

Neither Baker Tilly nor Pan Pacific Leasing disclosed the value of the deal when asked. Pan Pacific's spokesman would say only that the EVs were bought at "around market value".

Checks by ST found six units of the Shineray X30L electric vans for sale on online classified site Sgcarmart. EVCo was the only company to have imported this brand of vehicle to Singapore. These vehicles, registered on the last two days of March 2023, are listed for sale at between \$80,800 and \$81,800.

They each qualify for a \$10,000 rebate from the Land Transport Authority in March 2025 as they come under the earlier version of the Commercial Vehicle Emissions Scheme. The incentive was cut for commercial vehicles registered from April 1, 2023.

According to Pan Pacific Leasing, about half of the EVs it took over are being used by clients. The majority of these leases have around four more years to go and there will be no changes to the terms of the contract, its spokesman said.

Pan Pacific Leasing expects to be able to find hirers for the unused vehicles within the next three months.

Besides Shineray, the vehicles sold to Pan Pacific Leasing also included models from brands such as Maxus, which is another Chinese EV brand, and Toyota.

With the purchase, Pan Pacific Leasing has around 700 electric vans in its fleet of 3,200 light goods vehicles.

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As Browse-n-Borrow does not have a book drop, users must return books at libraries.

NLB's Book Dispenser can hold around 260 physical books and carries titles that are exclusively in English. But Browse-n-Borrow also carries Chinese, Malay and Tamil books.

Retiree Karen Lee, 68, a Bukit Batok resident who visited the Bukit Batok Public Library with her granddaughter Christine Khoo twice a month before its closure, plans to borrow books from the kiosk. She added that children will be able to use the kiosk easily as they are digitally savvy.

"I think it is very useful because it is very convenient for people to collect books and borrow books," said Christine, 11.

Housewife Lee Fong Lin, 56, who used to visit the Bukit Batok Public Library every week, said she prefers visiting libraries as they have more variety, but will use the kiosk if she finds a book that suits her reading tastes.

Social worker James Goh, 45, said that elderly users who are "not IT-savvy" might find it difficult to borrow books with Browse-n-Borrow.

He added that although having a book drop at the kiosk would make returning books more convenient, he is certain he will still borrow books from it as it seems easy to use.

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Tingkat, catering businesses highlight safety standards after firm loses its licence

Steps they take include discarding unused ingredients, employing food hygiene officers

Jordan Loo

Tingkat delivery and catering companies told The Straits Times they have strict measures in place to ensure food safety and quality.

These include discarding unused ingredients on a daily basis to ensure freshness, and employing food hygiene officers to oversee food production in central kitchens where food is prepared.

The issue came under the spotlight on May 10, when the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) cancelled the licence of catering firm Sakura Buffet following complaints about catered meals that five online businesses had delivered to homes.

These complaints involved undercooked or mouldy food, as well as the presence of foreign matter, such as hair and insects, in food.

Investigations found that all the meals had been supplied by Sakura Buffet, and that another seven online businesses were also linked to it. SFA said checks at Sakura Buffet's premises in Geylang Bahru subsequently found food safety lapses such as dirty premises and the false labelling of timestamps on packed food.

One of Sakura Buffet's former directors is also facing charges for allegedly owing workers some \$430,000 in unpaid wages.

ST contacted 26 companies, five of which responded, to shed light

on their food safety practices.

For instance, ingredients are delivered on a daily basis and extra ingredients are not used for subsequent meals in the interest of safety and freshness, said food hygiene officer Stanley Ng of tingkat business Homely Delights, which serves 200 meals a day.

Head chef Eugene Tan of confinement-focused tingkat business Tian Wei Signature, which serves 450 meals daily, said the company employs three certified Level 4 hygiene officers to consistently review and implement new food safety measures. Level 4 is the highest level of the Workforce Skills Qualifications food safety course.

Mr Jared Ng, manager of halal caterer Rilassi Catering, said: "We always have a food hygiene officer on-site and conduct audits on workers daily to ensure that they are not sick. When suppliers deliver

raw or frozen food, we will check the expiration date."

When food has been cooked, it is stored in a warmer kept above 60 deg C before being packed into thermal containers and delivered to customers, said Mr Kelvin Ong, who owns Mom's Cooking, a tingkat company.

Mr Alvin Ong, the company's executive chef, added: "All the food each chef cooks must pass through me for tasting. Because if our food is bad, it affects thousands of people, and we have the conscience to serve tasty and safe food."

He said that different-coloured cutting boards are used for vegetables, raw meat and cooked meat to prevent food contamination.

Some companies also take extra steps to ensure food is delivered according to proper procedures.

Said Rilassi's Mr Ng: "We have an in-house delivery service. As we

are a halal company, we cannot ensure that the foods will be handled according to halal procedures when outsourced."

Mr Veera Victor S., director of Indian catering and tingkat service company Brinda's, said: "All our deliveries are in-house, unless it is peak period."

During such busy periods, his company may tap external delivery drivers to fulfil orders.

Mr Alvin Ong said: "All our chefs and delivery drivers have been with us for more than eight years. When a worker is loyal and experienced, we can rely on him to do the right procedures."

In its statement on the cancellation of Sakura Buffet's licence, SFA named the 12 online businesses linked to the company, many of which sold meals targeting specific dietary needs. These included confinement meals, vegetarian food and healthy meals for those watching their weight.

"Companies are trying to gain market share by creating multiple brands. Customers regularly change tingkat companies for a few months only to return," said Homely Delights' Mr Stanley Ng.

Mr Stanley Ng, who has been a food hygiene officer for more than eight years, added: "A central kitchen with a few brands can be safe, but more than 10 brands and it becomes a problem. Staff will be overstretched, struggle to handle the workload, and thus compromise on safety."

He said that the incident involv-

ing Sakura Buffet has affected his company's business, as one of the 12 linked businesses – Home Tingkat Catering – shares a similar name with that of his firm.

"When customers book our company, they ask whether we are related to Home Tingkat," he said.

Mr Alvin Ong from Mom's Cooking said: "These (suspended) companies tarnish our reputation and others in the tingkat industry. Consumers will lose faith in the tingkat industry. Companies who play by the rules and ensure safe food are at the suffering end."

However, not all companies with multiple brands use shared kitchens. Firms such as Tian Wei Signature and ReLacto told ST they are under the same management, but operate from two separate kitchens as this allows for extra food storage and preparation space.

Madam Rosie Ching, 45, principal lecturer of statistics at the Singapore Management University, said that her confidence in the tingkat and catering industry will "take a beating" after Sakura Buffet's suspension.

She orders buffets from Elsie's Kitchen, a catering company, more than 10 times a year. "My confidence (in the company) stems from repeated positive experiences with the trusted quality, variety and taste of its food, its professionalism in set-up, and friendly communication with the ordering process."

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Scenes of ancient Turkey in Gardens by the Bay's Rose Romance display

Joyce Lim
Senior Correspondent

TURKEY – For the first time, damask roses – one of the oldest flowers in history – are being featured at Gardens by the Bay's Rose Romance floral display.

In its fifth edition, the exhibition – which runs from June 2 to 30 at the Flower Dome – showcases close to 16,000 roses of 70 varieties, curated in collaboration with the Turkish Embassy in Singapore.

Other varieties featured for the first time include the exotic "black" roses of Isparta, Rose Eden Climber and Leonardo da Vinci roses.

Turkey is among the world's top growers of the damask rose. Renowned for its captivating aroma, the rose's oil has been used in perfumes for centuries.

Rose Romance aims to take visitors on a journey to the ancient ruins of Hierapolis and the rose gardens of Isparta, as well as other cultural landmarks like Sagalassos, said Ms Grace Yang, senior manager of conservatory operations at Gardens by the Bay, who started working on the showcase a year ago.

Upon entering the Flower Dome, visitors will be greeted by elements of Turkish architecture in the top-level viewing gallery.

As they make their way down to the centre field, they will see Hellenistic arches and a fountain inspired by the Antonine period of the Roman Empire from AD138 to AD192.

These capture the influence of ancient Greece in Turkey's rich history, added Ms Yang.

Other features include a rose field, rose arches, and a distillery to show how roses are harvested and processed into rose oil and rosewater, as well as traditional Bodrum houses with whitewashed stone walls, and architecture inspired by the Seljuk dynasty that ruled Central Asia from the 11th to the 14th century.

To recreate a scene from the Unesco-listed Pamukkale – a tourist destination in south-western Turkey famed for its white travertine terraces with ancient thermal spa pools – colourful balloons are used to represent the hot air balloons that dot the sky above the stunning white landscape, said Ms Yang.

Over the past week, a 10-man team worked through nights – between the Flower Dome's closing and opening hours, from 9pm to 9am – to painstakingly plant each rose and have the display ready for opening day on June 2.

One of the challenges the team faces is timing the budding and flowering of the roses for the display, ensuring that all the flowers remain in bloom throughout the entire four-week period.

The team will have to remove the dead flowers from the rose bushes to encourage new bud growth, helping to keep the display vibrant.

"I hope visitors will delight in the variety of roses in our display, each unique in colour and size, and leave with a deeper appreciation of Turkey's rich culture," said Ms Yang.



Visitors at the Rose Romance floral display at the Flower Dome in Gardens by the Bay on June 2. For the first time, damask roses – one of the oldest flowers in history – are being featured at the floral display. The exhibition – which runs from June 2 to 30 – showcases close to 16,000 roses of 70 varieties, curated in collaboration with the Turkish Embassy in Singapore. ST PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI



The Antonine Nymphaeum in Sagalassos, Turkey. Visitors to Gardens by the Bay will see a fountain inspired by the Antonine period of the Roman Empire.



The Unesco-listed Pamukkale is a tourist destination in south-western Turkey famed for its white travertine terraces with ancient thermal spa pools.



A picker in a rose field in Isparta, a western province in Turkey with some 25 million sq m of fields dedicated to growing mainly damask roses – earning it the name City of Roses.

The Straits Times had a special preview of Turkey's romance with roses during a trip to the country in May, hosted by Gardens by the Bay, Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Turkish Airlines.

The trip was organised by the Turkish Embassy in Singapore.

The rose harvest was in full swing in Isparta, a western province with some 25 million sq m of fields dedicated to growing mainly damask roses – earning it the name City of Roses.

Harvest takes place in May and June, producing about 13,000kg of

roses and 1,500kg of rose oil, as well as rosewater.

Ms Yang, who hosted ST while also doing research during the trip, said one of the highlights of the trip was seeing the different planting palettes used throughout the city.

"They like to use contrasting colours, like bright pink and red together. These are some of the elements we have brought back to our display," she added.

The group also visited the Hierapolis, the once-thriving ancient city overlooking the natural terrac-

es of Pamukkale and now a Unesco World Heritage site with well-preserved ruins.

"What might seem like mere ruins or stones to some people hold rich stories and significant histories," said Ms Yang, who said she has a deep appreciation for architecture and historical buildings.

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SCAN TO WATCH
Picking roses in Isparta, Turkey
<https://str.sg/vid-rose>

Two members and one alternate member of Council of Presidential Advisers sworn in



President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and (from far right) Justice Belinda Ang with Mr Tan Chong Meng, Mr Peter Seah Lim Huat and Mr Gan Seow Kee. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

Kolette Lim

Mr Tan Chong Meng and Mr Peter Seah Lim Huat were sworn in as members of the Council of Presidential Advisers (CPA) by President Tharman Shanmugaratnam on June 3.

Mr Tan, who is the chairman of JTC Corporation, replaced Ho Bee Land executive chairman Chua Thian Poh, whose term ended on June 1 after seven years of service.

Besides his JTC post, Mr Tan is also deputy chairman of the National University Health System and a

board director of Temasek.

Mr Seah, chairman of the board of DBS Group Holdings and its executive committee, was reappointed to continue his term, which started on Jan 8, 2021.

Both members were appointed for a six-year term ending June 1, 2030, said the President's Office.

Mr Gan Seow Kee, vice-chairman of the Singapore Business Federation, was also sworn in on June 3 as an alternate member of the council for a four-year term.

The CPA advises the president on the use of his discretionary and custodial powers. It is obligatory for the president to consult the CPA when exercising his discretionary powers related to all fiscal and appointment matters.

The council consists of eight members and two alternate members, who are appointed by the president or nominated by the prime minister, the chief justice and the chairman of the Public Service Commission (PSC).

Mr Seah and Mr Gan were appointed by Mr Tharman at his discretion, while Mr Tan was appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister. Their terms started on June 2.

The CPA is currently chaired by Mr Eddie Teo, who has been serving in the role since Jan 2, 2019. He was PSC chairman until he retired in 2018.

The council's other members include former Keppel executive chairman Lim Chee Onn, former Bank of Singapore chief executive Bahren Shaari, former Singtel group chief executive Chua Sock Koong, former managing director at Ernst & Young Advisory Mildred Tan and former Supreme Court senior judge Chao Hick Tin.

The other alternate member is Dr Sudha Nair, executive director at family violence specialist centre Pave.

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NUS prof's biomedical engineering work leads to prestigious UK fellowship

His innovations include a cancer detection device, smart insole for diabetic patients

Leow Wen Xuan

Collecting samples from a tumour to diagnose cancer can be an extremely painful and invasive process for patients, often requiring a needle or surgery to collect tumour cells.

Now, just a simple blood test can help doctors detect cancer, using a device that can sieve out tumour cells from blood drawn from patients.

Developed in 2009 by Professor Lim Chwee Teck, director of the Institute for Health Innovation and Technology at the National University of Singapore (NUS), the bio-chip is the world's first to filter tumour cells through micro-channels, allowing doctors to isolate selected tumour cells for analysis and accurately diagnose certain cancers such as breast and prostate cancers.

The cancer detection device was later commercialised into a machine launched by Biolidics, one of

the deep-tech companies co-founded by Prof Lim.

Since its development, 140 systems have been installed in more than 20 countries, including the US, China, the United Kingdom, Germany and Singapore.

This is just one of the many projects that the serial inventor has helmed throughout his 24-year career at NUS.

In recognition of his contributions to the field of biomedical engineering, Prof Lim was in May elected as Fellow of the Royal Society, the UK's national academy of sciences and the oldest scientific academy in continuous existence.

Past fellows include renowned scientists Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill and Stephen Hawking.

Among the 70 newly elected fellows of the Royal Society in 2024, Prof Lim is the only scientist based in Singapore.

Fellows are elected for life through a peer review process on the basis of excellence in science.



Professor Lim Chwee Teck, director of the Institute for Health Innovation and Technology at NUS, was in May elected as Fellow of the Royal Society, the UK's national academy of sciences and the oldest scientific academy in continuous existence. Among the 70 newly elected fellows of the Royal Society in 2024, he is the only scientist based in Singapore. ST PHOTO: LUTHER LAU

"I'm both proud and very humbled to be a Singaporean who's elected as a Fellow (of the Royal Society)," Prof Lim said.

"It's not only a recognition of the work that I'm doing in my lab, it also underscores Singapore's growing influence and contribution to the global scientific landscape."

His other accolades include the Nature Lifetime Achievement Award for Mentoring in Science in 2023 and the President's Technology Award in 2011.

Other innovations pioneered by Prof Lim include a smart insole that helps diabetic patients to monitor pressure on different parts of the foot via an app to help manage ulcers on the bottom of their feet.

Excessive pressure can cause ulcers to get infected, which may lead to amputation. To prevent this, the app alerts patients to rest when the insole senses excessive pressure.

Despite co-founding six deep-tech companies since 2000, Prof Lim has given the majority of the shares to his students.

"To be fair, they are the ones running the company," he said.

After starting a company, he

usually gets involved for two to three years before passing the baton to his students, he added.

"I'm still very interested in doing research. I want to spend time in a university doing research, develop more technology and then spin up more companies."

Prof Lim is also venturing into the metaverse.

With a team of researchers, he developed wireless gloves that can convey touch and grip when interacting with virtual objects in a virtual space.

Currently, the team is testing the use of the gloves for patients undergoing rehabilitation.

Patients can potentially undergo rehabilitation at home by wearing

the gloves and a virtual reality headset, and do exercises such as picking up virtual blocks that they can feel and grab.

A hospital in Norway is also keen to collaborate with the team to use the gloves as a rehabilitation tool from home, said Prof Lim.

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Jail for HR director who embezzled almost \$200,000 via 'allowances'

Christine Tan

An associate director of human resources who lined her pockets with almost \$200,000 of her company's money was put behind bars on June 3.

Tan Lee Nah, 53, was sentenced to 18 months and six weeks' jail after admitting to two counts of cheating and one charge of criminal breach of trust.

Eighteen other charges were taken into consideration during sentencing.

In March 2017, Tan was employed as a human resources manager at interior design firm D'Perception Singapore.

Two months into the job, she began stealing from the company.

But her employers did not know, and promoted her to associate director of human resources in May 2019.

Tan was in charge of her company's entire payroll and was the only person in the firm with password access to its payroll system.

While employees' basic salaries would be stated on a spreadsheet and signed by the company's senior management, the employees'

allowances would only be indicated on their individual payslips.

From May 2017 onwards, Tan made false claims for transport and other allowances every month, allowing her to receive an extra sum of between \$1,000 and \$6,000 monthly.

One of her charges states that over 11 months, from January to November 2019, she received a total of \$125,293 in multiple false allowance claims.

In August 2017, the company gave Tan two cheques of about \$1,500 each to pay for the Central Provident Fund contributions of a new employee. But Tan encashed the cheques to her own account instead.

In total, Tan embezzled \$195,786 from the company over 2½ years.

Her misdeeds were discovered only in November 2019, when somebody informed the company's managing director that Tan had printed out a copy of her salary statement on the company's shared printer, which revealed that she had received allowances on top of her basic salary.

The managing director noticed that the payslip showed allowances for which Tan had not been entitled to claim.

The company's finance director retrieved her payslips and discovered that she had been embezzling company funds.

Tan was fired from the firm in December 2019, and the finance director filed a police report a month later.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Lu Huiyi said that Tan should be jailed for between 18 months and six weeks, and 18 months and eight weeks.

The prosecutor noted that Tan was in a management position and commanded a high degree of trust.

Pointing out that Tan had offended over the course of more than two years, DPP Lu said that there was a need to deter her from future wrongdoing.

Her defence lawyer, Mr John Koh of Populus Law, asked for 15 months and six weeks' jail instead, and said that she was "deeply remorseful" about her actions.

For each charge of cheating, Tan could have been jailed for up to 10 years and fined.

As for committing criminal breach of trust, she could have been given up to 15 years' jail and fined.

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The trainer

Felix Cheong is an award-winning author of 27 books across different genres, from poetry and fiction to non-fiction and graphic novels. Winner of the Young Artist Award in 2000, he holds a master's in creative writing and is currently an adjunct university lecturer.

THE STRAITS TIMES

COMPANY BRIEFS



PHOTO: REUTERS

Qatar Airways

Qatar Airways is in talks with plane makers Airbus and Boeing for a major wide-body order, its chief executive said on June 3. CEO Badr Mohammed Al Meer told reporters a report that the airline was in talks with Airbus to order A350 and Boeing 777X wide-body jets was largely correct. Bloomberg News reported on June 2 that the airline was in talks to buy some 200 aircraft split between Airbus and Boeing. Mr Al Meer confirmed talks for a three-digit order but said the number being mentioned was off by around 30 per cent. He declined to say if it was higher or lower than the reported figure. REUTERS

Microsoft

Microsoft plans to invest US\$3.2 billion (S\$4.32 billion) in artificial intelligence and cloud facilities in Sweden, its largest-ever infrastructure bet in the Nordic country drawing on the region's rich supply of green energy. The move cements the tech giant's footprint in the nation by adding 20,000 GPUs, or graphics processing units, at its three data centres. The company is also committing to training 250,000 people in "essential AI skills", according to a statement on June 3. BLOOMBERG

Yuxiao Fund

Australia has ordered Chinese-linked Singapore-based Yuxiao Fund and its associates to sell their stakes in rare earths miner Northern Minerals, as part of an effort by US allies to counter the Asian nation's dominance of critical minerals. Treasurer Jim Chalmers on June 3 cited protecting the national interest as behind his decision. Along with Yuxiao Fund, its associates Indian Ocean International Shipping and Service, Black Stone Resources, and Chinese nationals Xi Wang and Ximei Liu were ordered to sell their stock in the Sydney-listed company. BLOOMBERG

BullsAndBears

Singapore stocks end higher, tracking regional gains

• STI rises by 0.4%, or 12.28 points, to close at 3,348.87

• Gainers beat losers 345 to 237 across broader market

• DFI Retail Group biggest gainer on index, up 7.1%

Tan Nai Lun

Stocks in Singapore ended higher on June 3, tracking gains in the region.

The benchmark Straits Times Index (STI) rose 0.4 per cent or 12.28 points to 3,348.87. Across the broader market, gainers outnumbered losers 345 to 237, after 1.39 billion securities worth \$1.43 billion changed hands.

The Nikkei 225 rose 1.1 per cent, the Hang Seng Index gained 1.8 per cent, the Kospi Composite Index was up 1.7 per cent, and Indonesia's IDX Composite ended 0.9 per cent higher. Mr Yeap Jun Rong, market ana-

lyst at IG, noted that a late-night bounce in Wall Street last week had caught the bears by surprise and put a halt to the recent bout of profit-taking in major US indexes. This set Asia equities up for a positive session.

Furthermore, market participants also found some comfort that the US personal consumption expenditures (PCE) data did not trigger much inflation surprise, he said.

US headline and core PCE price indexes both matched expectations on a year-on-year basis, which offered some conviction that inflation is on track for further softening, Mr Yeap added.

On the STI, DFI Retail Group was the biggest gainer, rising 7.1 per cent or 13 US cents to US\$1.97.

The biggest decliner was Genting Singapore, which fell 1.1 per cent or one cent to 90 cents.

The three local banks ended higher on June 3. DBS Bank gained 0.2 per cent or eight cents to \$36.07, OCBC Bank was up 0.3 per cent or four cents to \$14.55, while UOB gained 0.3 per cent or nine cents to \$30.88.

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DAILY

Straits Times Index

June 3, 2024

3,348.87 ↑

+12.28 (+0.37%)

Current streak

3 days

Day high

3,355.63

Day low

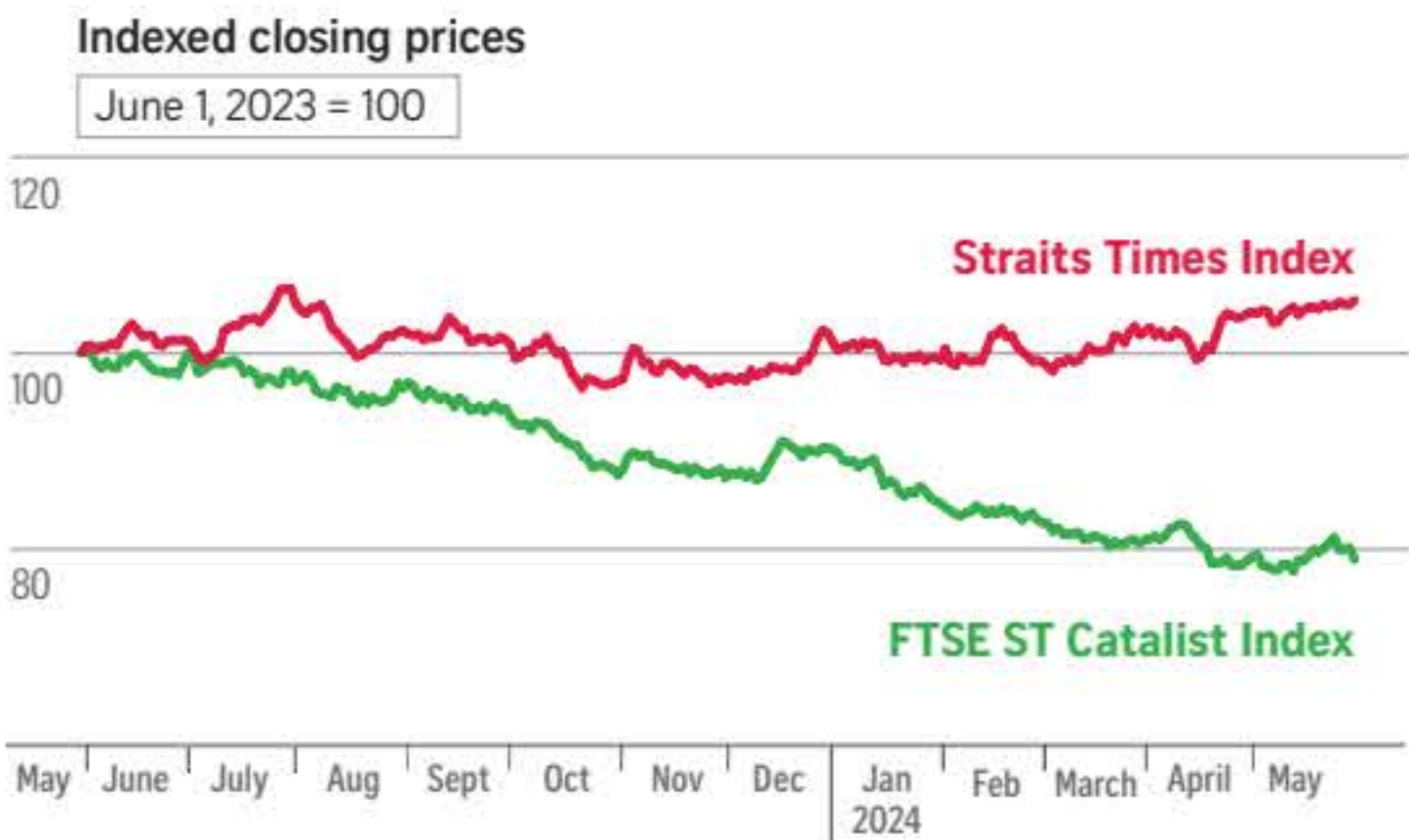
3,340.12

52-week high

3,373.98 (July 31, 2023)

52-week low

3,053.36 (Oct 23, 2023)



FTSE ST Catalyst Index

June 3, 2024

↑ 167.49

+0.87 (+0.52%)

Current streak

1 day

Day high

167.68

Day low

166.30

52-week high

211.49 (June 5, 2023)

52-week low

164.16 (May 14, 2024)



FTSE ST All-Share Index

June 3, 2024

↑ 777.26

+2.69 (+0.35%)

Current streak

3 days

Day high

778.47

Day low

775.61

52-week high

792.41 (July 31, 2023)

52-week low

713.22 (Oct 23, 2023)

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
305	247	CapLand Ascendas REI	264	+3	15444	5.7	1.2
208	168	CapLand IntCom T	197	+1	31510	5.5	0.9
348	244	CapitaLandInvest	267	+1	7019	4.5	1
750	555	CityDev	558	-3	15194	2.2	0.6
3615	2774.6	DBS Grp	3607	+8	3054	5.3	1.7
297	175	DFIRG USD	US197	+13	1830	1.5	-
233	201	Fraser's Cpt Tr	218	+1	4020	5.6	1
130	96	Fraser's L&C Tr	98	-1	15307	7.2	0.8
106	81.5	Genting Sing	90	-1	22866	3.9	1.3
440	278	HongkongLand USD	US337	-2	2923	6.5	0.2
5257	3492	JMH USD	US3795	+115	255	5.7	37.8
3490	2376	Jardine C&C	2643	+69	2324	5.9	1
746	615	Keppel	668	-4	3295	5.1	1.1
253	210	Mapletree Ind Tr	219	-1	5575	6.1	1.2
175	129	Mapletree Log Tr	134	+1	93462	6.7	1
173	118	Mapletree PanAsia Co	125	+3	72849	7.1	0.7
1458	1200	OCBC Bank	1455	+4	4249	5.6	1.2
295	240	SATS	284	cd	8988	0.5	1.8
998	887	SGX	966	+10	2106	3.4	6.1
805	587	SIA	677	cd	4095	7.1	1.2
430	354	ST Engineering	414	-4	4035	3.9	5.2
294	148	Seatrium Ltd	179	+3	72468	-	18.9
610	450	Sembcorp Ind	509	unch	1522	2.6	2
268	225	Singtel	248	cd	29908	6	1.6
615	47	ThaiBev	50	+0.5	21152	4.5	1.7
3135	2682	UOB	3088	+9	2262	5.5	1.2
714	537	UOL	540	+1	965	3.7	0.4
1638	1136	Venture Corp	1396	-6	464	5.4	1.4
410	307	Wilmar Intl	308	-1	4673	5.5	0.7
234	123	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	232	+4	34583	2.8	2.4

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL 000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV	
398	178.2	AEM SGD	194	+11	3935	-	1.3	
135	116	AIMS APAC Reit	127	-1	716	7.4	1	
107	67.5	Aztech Gbl	97	+1	525	4.6	2.1	
220	160	BRC Asia	207	unch	34	7.7	1.3	
252	144	Best World	248	-1	1154	-	1.8	
79.5	53	Bumitama Agri	69	-1	450	1.8	0.9	
120	95	CapLand India T	105	-1	773	6.1	0.9	
99.5	73	China Aviation	87.5	unch	320	5.8	0.6	
86	70	Civmec	81.5	+1	77	5.5	1	
176	10.8	Cosco	15.9	+0.4	6990	-	0.7	
162	112	CromwellReit EUR	144	+1	119	10.9	0.7	
68	50	Daiwa Hse Log Tr	57	-0.5	585	9.2	0.8	
139	85	Delfi	85.5	unch	342	6.7	1.5	
67.5	37	DigiCore Reit USD	58.5	+0.5	1537	6.3	0.9	
42.5	20	Dyna-Mac	39	unch	2996	2.1	5.8	
35.5	28	EC World Reit	28	susp	-	131	2.2	
68	56	Far East HTrust	62.5	-0.5	443	6.5	0.7	
147	20.5	First Reit	24	unch	751	10.3	0.8	
34.5	34.5	Food Empire	109	-1	673	9.2	1.5	
53.5	42.5	Fraser's HTrust	43.5	+0.5	220	5.6	0.7	
174	80.5	Frencken	144	-1	2635	1.6	1.5	
104	80	Hong Fok	82	+1	406	1.2	0.2	
34.5	17.6	Japfa	32	+0.5	480	-	0.6	
38.5	12.2	KepPacOakReitUSD	14.1	+0.1	2885	17.7	0.2	
68.5	49	Lendlease Reit	55	-0.5	2430	8.5	0.7	
179	4	ManulifeReit USD	7	+0.2	2102	-	0.2	
164	59.5	Nanofilm	78.5	+1.5	3589	0.8	1.3	
26.5	8.7	Prime US REIT USD	12	+0.2	5211	22.6	0.2	
108	78.5	PropNex	87.5	-1	410	6.9	5.2	
98.5	56.5	Riverstone	90	-1	2523	5.6	2.7	
106	56.5	SamuderaShipping	101	+3.5	2514	10.9	0.7	
75.5	61	Sasseur Reit	67.5	-0.5	313	9.3	4.3	
52	37	SingPost	49	unch	1901	1.5	0.8	
53	44	StarhillGbl Reit	48	unch	719	7.9	0.7	
214	135	Straits Trading	137	-1	78	5.8	0.4	
158	100	UMS	119	cd	-2	6622	2.9	2
53	34.5	UtdHampshReitUSD	40	-0.5	45	12	0.6	
65.5	49.5	Valuetronics	62.5	cd	unch	134	6.9	1.1
85.5	39	Yanlord Land	46	unch	590	-	-	
10.8	39	Yoma Strategic	91	+0.6	36725	-	0.4	

Bonds

Company	Lasts sale	+or-	Vol ('000)
CityDev NCCPS	99	unch	40
Hyflux 6% CPS	6537	susp	-
UE Pref	190	-	-

ETFs

52-Week High	52-Week Low	Counter	Last Sale	+/-	Vol ('000)	Last Quote Buy	Last Quote Sell
107.6	101.8	ABF SG Bond ETF	104.1	+0.3	267	104.1	104.3
145	108	CF VN 30 SC ETF S\$G	129.9	+1.3	25	124	130.6
110	85	CF VN 30 SC ETF US\$	US95.3	-	-	-	-
184	149.7	CSOP LOW CARBON S\$	181.8	-	-	180.2	181.6
136.8	109	CSOP LOW CARBON US\$	US134.7	+1	-	133.3	134.4
88.4	70.3	CSOP iEdge SREIT ETF S\$	73.6	+0.3	632	73.5	73.7
30528	23093	GLD S\$G	29080	-250	2	29080	29110
22680	16945	GLD US\$	US21550	-130	3	21520	21550
1352	1280	ICBC CSOP CGB ETF S\$	1335	+1	-	1332	1335
900	780	IS ASIA HYG SSD	881xd	-13	6	880	881
679	586	IS ASIA HYG US\$	US652xd	-10	69	651	652
955	876	IS Asia BND US	US937xd	-6	-	935	938
1437	1087	IS INDIA CLIMATE US\$	US1413	+48	18	1375	1420
77	49.8	Lion-OCBC Sec HSTECH S\$	63.7	+1.5	4898	63.7	63.8
56.7	37.8	Lion-OCBC Sec HSTECH US\$	US46.8	-0.2	0	44	-
160.8	126.6	Lion-OSPL China L S\$	153	+1.9	57	153	155
104.5	90	Lion-OSPL Low Carbon S\$	104.5	+0.8	20	104.1	104.6
93.2	76.7	Lion-Phillip S-REIT	80.5	+0.7	936	80.3	80.5
105.1	100.7	Lion-OSPL APAC Fin S\$	104.3	+1	262	104.3	104.5
347.5	312.7	Nikko AM STI ETF	346.5	+2.5	123	345	346.5
97	92.5	NikkoAM SGD iGBond ETF	96.9	-	570	96.8	97
67	57.8	NikkoAM-STC A REIT US\$	US57.1	+0.6	92	56.6	57.2
90	73.2	NikkoAM-STC Asia REIT	76.7	+0.5	1449	76.7	76.9
102.5	94.3	PHIL SING INC	102.3	+0.6	7	101.4	102.2
85.9	68.7	Phil Ap Div Reit US\$	US80.8	-	-	78.6	79.6
345.4	310.1	STI ETF	341.6	+2.6	504	341.4	341.6
220	177	UETF SSE50China	198	-	-	197	203
77.8	66.1	UOB AP GRN REIT S\$	68.5	+0.8	4	68.1	68.5
1536	1128	XT MSCHINA US\$	US1350	-40	-	1300	1590

Gainers

	CLOSE	UP	%
JMH USD	3795	155.4	31
Jardine C&C	2643	69.0	27
Azeus	1005	65.0	6.9
NIO Inc. USD OV	554	29.7	41
DFIRG USD	197	17.6	7.1
AEM SGD	194	11.0	6.0
SGX	966	10.0	1.0
UOB	3088	9.0	0.3
DBS Grp	3607	8.0	0.2
Great Eastern	2640	8.0	0.3

Losers

	CLOSE	DOWN	%
UOI	620	-10.0	-1.6
Venture Corp	1396	-6.0	-0.4
SouthernAlliance	45	-4.5	-9.1
Keppel	668	-4.0	-0.6
PEC	515	-4.0	-7.2
ST Engineering	414	-4.0	-1.0
CityDev	558	-3.0	-0.5
Karin Tech	32	-3.0	-8.6
HongkongLand USD ...	337	-2.7	-0.6
Creative	121	-2.0	-1.6

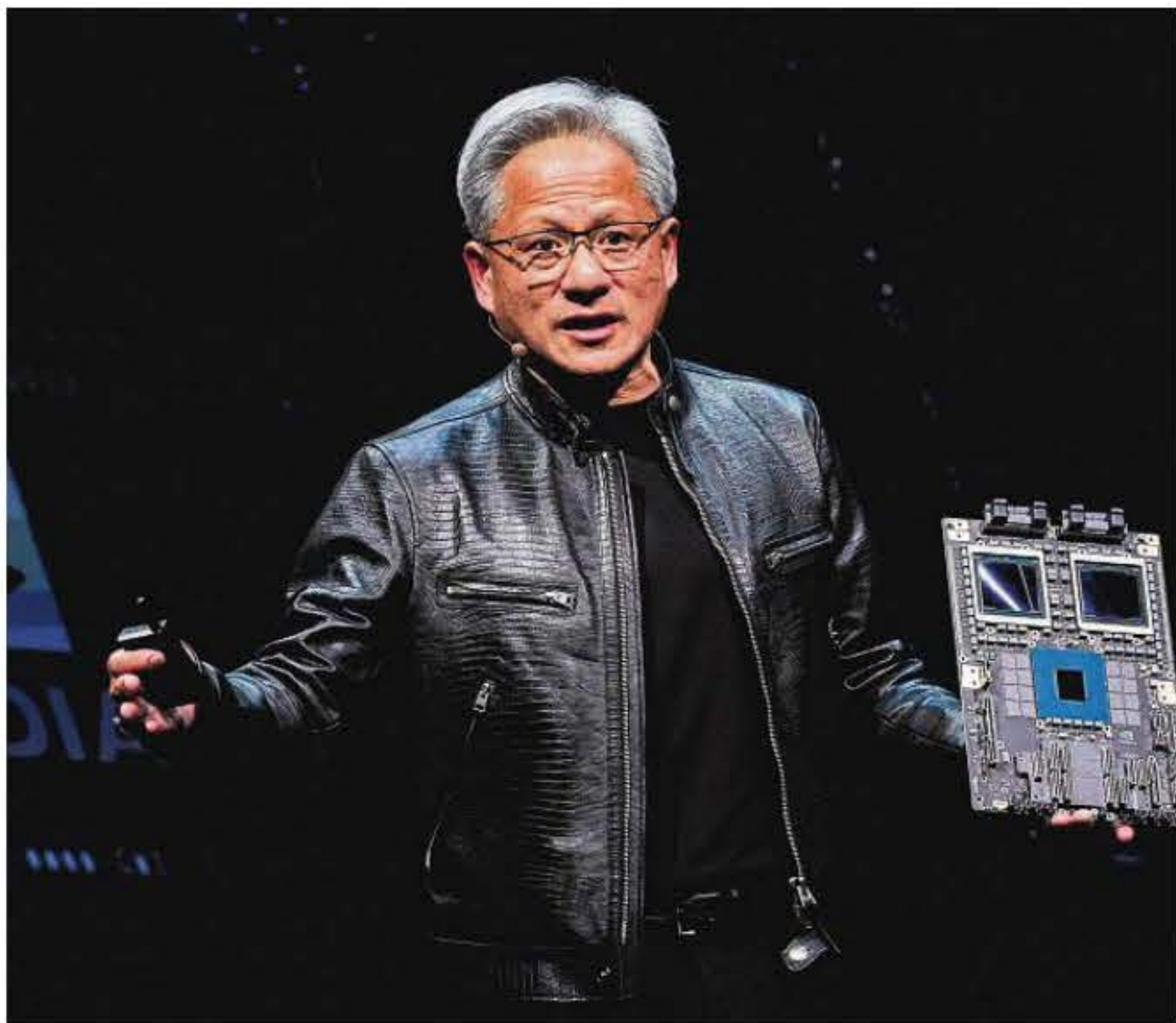
Most active

	VOLUME		VALUE(\$)
Mapletree Log Tr	93,462,500	Seatrium Ltd	129,139,389
Mapletree PanAsia Com Tr	72,849,100	Mapletree Log Tr	124,883,514
Seatrium Ltd	72,468,500	DBS Grp	110,046,194
Yoma Strategic	36,725,800	Mapletree PanAsia Com Tr	90,306,019
YZJ Shipbldg SGD	34,583,100	CityDev	85,296,230
CapLand IntCom T	31,510,700	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	79,365,564
Singtel	29,908,700	Singtel	74,330,605
Genting Sing	22,866,300	UOB	69,761,961
ThaiBev	21,152,300	CapLand IntCom T	62,400,758
LifeBrandz	17,630,900	OCBC Bank	61,750,818
Market volume	1,372,641,000	Market value	1,415,391,000

Interbank currency rates

		Jun 3	
Currencies		Against S\$	Against US\$
		Bid	Offer
S\$/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:			
Australian dollar	0.8971	0.8974	0.6637
Canadian dollar	0.9897	0.9900	0.7324
Euro	1.4649	1.4655	1.0838
NZ dollar	0.8295	0.8301	0.6137
Sterling pound	1.7183	1.7190	1.2713
US dollar	1.3516	1.3517	-
S\$/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:			
Chinese renminbi	18.6523	18.6539	13.8001
Danish kroner	19.6431	19.6457	14.5332
Hong Kong dollar	17.28	17.28	12.7869
Indian rupee	1.62	1.63	1.2020
Indonesia rupiah	0.0083	0.0083	0.0062
Japanese yen	0.8601	0.8604	0.6365
Korean won	0.0980	0.0981	0.0725
Malaysian ringgit	28.70	28.74	21.2314
New Taiwan dollar	4.1629	4.1670	3.0800
Norwegian krone	12.8797	12.8834	9.5293
Philippine peso	2.3029	2.3035	1.7039
Saudi riyal	36.0350	36.0396	26.6610
Swedish krona	12.8576	12.8611	9.5128
Swiss franc	149.7452	149.8227	110.7910
Thai baht	3.6619	3.6651	2.7093

Nvidia unveils new AI tools as it eyes upgrades every year



Nvidia chief executive Jensen Huang presenting the Blackwell platform at an event on June 2 ahead of the Computex trade show in Taipei. The chip giant is looking to broaden its customer base beyond the handful of cloud-computing giants that generate much of its sales. PHOTO: REUTERS

Firm expects to play key role as generative AI shifts to personal computers, says CEO

SAN FRANCISCO – Nvidia chief executive Jensen Huang said the company plans to upgrade its artificial intelligence (AI) accelerators every year, announcing a Blackwell Ultra chip for 2025 and a next-generation platform in development called Rubin for 2026.

The company – now best known for its AI data centre systems – also introduced new tools and software models on the eve of the Computex trade show in Taiwan. Nvidia sees the rise of generative AI as a new industrial revolution and expects to play a major role as the technology shifts to personal computers, the CEO said in a keynote address at National Taiwan University.

Nvidia has been the main bene-

ficiary of a massive flood of AI spending, helping turn the company into the world's most valuable chipmaker. But it now looks to broaden its customer base beyond the handful of cloud-computing giants that generate much of its sales.

As part of the expansion, Mr Huang expects a larger swathe of companies and government agencies to embrace AI – everyone from shipbuilders to drug developers. He returned to themes he set out a year ago at the same venue, including the idea that those without AI capabilities will be left behind.

“We are seeing computation inflation,” he said on June 2.

As the amount of data that

needs to be processed grows exponentially, traditional computing methods cannot keep up, and it is only through Nvidia's style of accelerated computing that the costs can be cut back, he said.

He touted 98 per cent cost savings and 97 per cent less energy required with Nvidia's technology, saying that constituted “CEO maths, which is not accurate, but it is correct”.

Mr Huang said the upcoming Rubin AI platform will use HBM4, the next iteration of the essential high-bandwidth memory that has grown into a bottleneck for AI accelerator production, with leader SK Hynix largely sold out until 2025. He otherwise did not offer detailed specifications for the upcoming products, which will follow Blackwell.

Nvidia got its start selling gaming cards for desktop PCs, and that background is coming into

play as computer makers push to add more AI functions to their machines.

Microsoft and its hardware partners are using Computex to show off new laptops with AI enhancements under the branding of Copilot+. The majority of those devices coming to market are based on a new type of processor that will enable them to go longer on one battery charge, provided by Nvidia rival Qualcomm.

While those devices are good for simple AI functionality, adding an Nvidia graphics card will massively increase their performance and bring new features to popular software like games, Nvidia said. PC makers such as Asustek Computer are offering such computers, the company said.

To help software makers bring more new capabilities to the PC, Nvidia is offering tools and pre-trained AI models. They will handle complex tasks, such as deciding whether to crunch data on the machine itself or send it out to a data centre over the internet.

Separately, Nvidia is releasing a new design for server computers built on its chips. The MGX program is used by companies such as Hewlett Packard Enterprise and Dell Technologies to allow them to get to market faster with products that are used by corporations and government agencies. Even rivals Advanced Micro Devices and Intel are taking advantage of the design with servers that put their processors alongside Nvidia chips.

Earlier-announced products, such as Spectrum X for networking and Nvidia Inference Microservices – or NIM, which Mr Huang called “AI in a box” – are now generally available and being widely adopted, the company said. It is also going to offer free access to the NIM products. The microservices are a set of intermediate software and models that help companies roll out AI services more quickly, without having to worry about the underlying technology. Companies that deploy them then have to pay Nvidia a usage fee.

Mr Huang also promoted the use of digital twins in a virtual world that Nvidia calls the Omniverse. To demonstrate the scale possible, he showed a digital twin of planet earth, called Earth 2, and how it can help conduct more sophisticated weather pattern modelling and other complex tasks. He noted that Taiwan-based contract manufacturers such as Hon Hai Precision Industry, also known as Foxconn, are using the tools to make plans and operate their factories more efficiently. BLOOMBERG



AMD chief executive Lisa Su unveiled the chip giant's latest artificial intelligence processors at the Computex trade show in Taipei on June 3. PHOTO: AFP

AMD launches new AI chips in bid to challenge Nvidia

TAIPEI – Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) unveiled its latest artificial intelligence (AI) processors on June 3 and detailed its plan to develop AI chips over the next two years in a bid to challenge industry leader Nvidia.

At the Computex technology trade show in Taipei, AMD chief executive officer Lisa Su introduced the MI325X accelerator, which is set to be made available in the fourth quarter of 2024.

The race to develop generative AI (GenAI) programs has led to towering demand for the advanced chips used in AI data centres able to support these complex applications.

US-based AMD has been vying to compete against Nvidia, which currently dominates the lucrative market for AI semiconductors and commands about an 80 per cent share.

AMD also introduced an upcoming series of chips titled MI350, which is expected to be available in 2025 and will be based on new chip architecture.

The firm said that compared with the currently available MI300 series of AI chips, it expects the MI350 to perform 35 times better in inference – the process of computing GenAI responses.

Additionally, AMD revealed the MI400 series, which will arrive in 2026 and will be based on an architecture called Next.

Investors who have poured billions of dollars into Wall Street's picks-and-shovels trade have been seeking longer-term updates from chip firms as they evaluate the

longevity of the booming GenAI rally, which so far has shown no signs of slowing down.

AMD's shares have more than doubled since the start of 2023. This surge still pales in comparison with the more than sevenfold rise in Nvidia's shares in the same period.

AMD is aiming at an AI chip product cycle of one year. Similarly, Nvidia said it plans to release a new family of AI chips every year.

Ms Su said in April that the company expects AI chip sales of roughly US\$4 billion (S\$5.4 billion) for 2024, an increase of US\$500 million from its prior estimate.

At the Computex event, AMD also said its latest generation of central processing units (CPUs) will likely be available in the second half of 2024.

While businesses generally prioritise spending on AI chips in data centres, some of AMD's CPUs are used in conjunction with graphics processor units, though the ratio is skewed in favour of graphics processing units.

AMD detailed the architecture for its new neural processing units, which are dedicated to handling on-device AI tasks in AI personal computers.

Chipmakers have been banking on added AI capabilities to drive growth in the PC market as it emerges from a years-long slump.

PC providers such as HP and Lenovo will release devices that include AMD's AI PC chips. AMD said its processors exceed Microsoft's Copilot+ PC requirements. REUTERS

Oil prices little changed after Opec+ signals plan to ease production curbs

Oil was little changed after Opec+ set out a plan to restore some production as early as October despite concerns over the demand outlook and robust supply from outside the group.

Production cuts will continue in full in the third quarter, before being gradually phased out over the following 12 months, the Saudi Energy Ministry said on June 2 after an Opec+ meeting.

Brent traded near US\$81 a barrel and West Texas Intermediate was close to US\$77.

Goldman Sachs Group said the Opec+ decision was bearish given a recent increase in inventories, but UBS Group and RBC Capital Markets expressed confidence that the alliance will continue to diligently manage the market.

Most analysts had expected Opec+ to extend the curbs until the end of 2024.

The agreement aims to keep supporting oil prices while easing the production restraints against which some members – such as the United Arab Emirates – have chafed as they sought to have their output levels upgraded.

“We have seen a rather muted price response so far”, and while moderating cuts from October may weigh on the market, demand is still likely to pick up over the coming months, said Saxo Bank head of commodity strategy Ole Hansen.

“We view the US\$75 level in Brent as a major line in the sand below which Opec+ would likely step up efforts to support prices.”

Trading volumes were higher than usual on June 3, but oil option skews are still signalling bearishness. So-called puts – which profit from lower prices – remain at a wide premium over the opposite calls.

Oil capped a monthly loss on May 31 in part due to persistent concerns around the demand outlook for China, the world's biggest crude importer. The prompt spread for Brent briefly slipped into a bearish contango structure last week, and fuel markets have been flashing signs of weakness.

Futures are still higher in 2024 after geopolitical tensions from the Middle East to Ukraine raised concerns about supply. Israel has pushed back on a ceasefire plan laid out by US President Joe Biden, as the war in Gaza approaches its eighth month. BLOOMBERG



Chinese tourists forecast to spend \$1.3 trillion on holidays at home

HONG KONG – Chinese tourists embarking on adventures closer to home are forecast to pump a record 6.79 trillion yuan (S\$1.3 trillion) into the mainland economy in 2024 – topping pre-pandemic levels for the first time.

Spending by domestic holidaymakers is expected to be 11 per cent higher than in 2019 – before the Covid-19 pandemic stopped most travel, according to a report by the World Travel and Tourism Council and Oxford Economics.

“Chinese visitors are starting to travel again and this is only going to continue to grow,” said travel council president Julia Simpson. “The

tourism sector has shown signs of resilience and a strong recovery.”

Chinese holidaymakers are a driving force for the global tourism industry, with many countries keenly awaiting the return of travel and spending from the world's biggest market of travellers. In 2019, Chinese travellers made 170 million trips abroad and spent almost US\$248 billion overseas – making up 14 per cent of global tourism spending, according to World Travel and Tourism Council data.

But a backlog in processing visas in countries like the US, and more expensive international flights, have kept Chinese holidaymakers

closer to home, where they are flocking to cities for popular local delicacies like spicy street foods, and smaller towns in a “reverse travel” trend shunning crowds.

Meanwhile, international visitors to China still have not rebounded. Spending by foreign tourists on the mainland in 2024 is expected to hit 715 billion yuan, about a quarter below 2019 levels. China was one of the last big economies to reopen its borders, and inbound flights to the country have not fully returned.

In recent months, China has loosened visa restrictions for visitors from Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, along with those from some

European countries and cruise ship passengers, in a bid to boost both inbound tourism and investment. At the beginning of 2024, Beijing said it had eased visa requirements for 11 countries since July 2023.

China reported 82 million tourist arrivals in 2023 – about 56 per cent of the 2019 level, according to the country's National Bureau of Statistics. The number of visits made by people from outside of Hong Kong and Macau was just 13.8 million, lagging pre-Covid-19 figures by around 57 per cent.

And even as the country's economy has weakened and retail spending remained sluggish, travel is one of the stronger consumption categories, according to Morgan Stanley.

The tourism and travel sector broadly supported 80 million tourism and travel jobs in 2024, about 2 per cent below 2019, according to the report. BLOOMBERG

Visitors at the Imperial Vault of Heaven at Beijing's Temple of Heaven on May 14. Spending by China's domestic holidaymakers in 2024 is expected to be 11 per cent higher than in 2019 – before the Covid-19 pandemic stopped most travel, according to a report. PHOTO: AFP

Real estate execs notably downbeat on prime residential sector: Survey

But overall sentiment in Singapore's market continues to improve in first quarter

Overall sentiment in Singapore's real estate market continued to improve in the first quarter of 2024, but industry players have turned markedly more pessimistic on the prime residential sector, as well as the office and business park/high-tech segments.

Real estate executives polled by the Institute of Real Estate and Urban Studies (Ireus) at the National University of Singapore (NUS) cited major economic indicators pointing to higher growth, low unemployment rate and the easing of core inflation as reasons for overall improved sentiment.

Yet, survey respondents were notably more negative than positive on prospects for the prime residential segment.

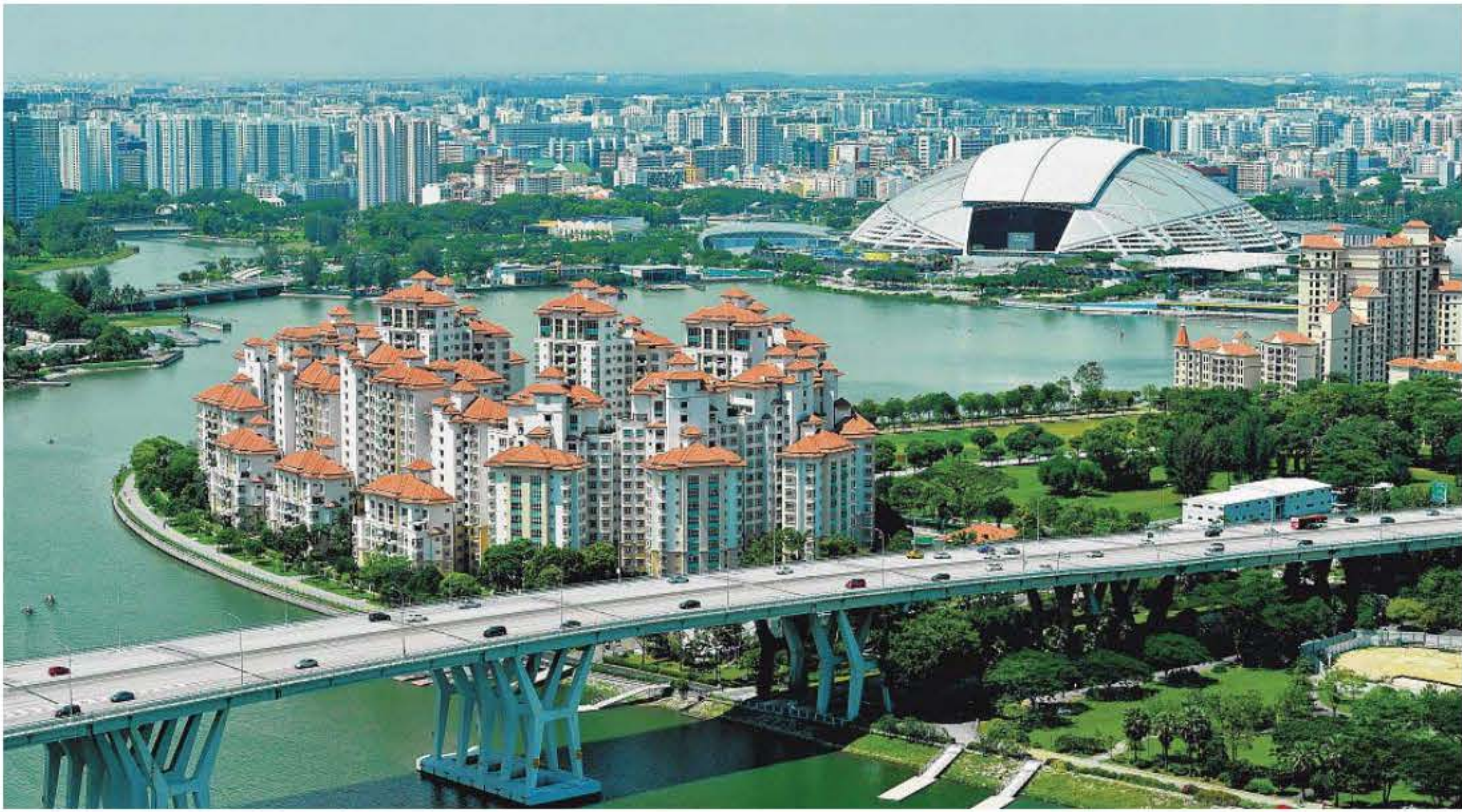
"We are concerned with potential oversupply of residential apartments as the Government ramps up government land sales supply over the last few (quarters). Potential cooling measures are always a concern," commented one survey respondent.

Those polled were most optimistic about prospects in the hotel/serviced apartment sector, buoyed by strong tourism arrivals and receipts, said Ireus, which conducts the quarterly survey.

Industry professionals were also more positive than negative on suburban retail and the industrial/logistics business.

Notably, the future sentiment index – reflecting outlook over the next six months – reached 5.1, above the neutral score of 5, for the first time in five consecutive months, said Ireus.

The current sentiment index – reflecting sentiment over the past six months – inched up to 4.7 in the first quarter, from a score of 4.4 in the preceding quarter. Sentiment has picked up in the last six



Despite the pessimism about prospects in the prime residential segment, real estate players polled by the NUS Institute of Real Estate and Urban Studies do not see developers holding back new launches or reducing prices, although fewer respondents expected new launch prices to increase. ST FILE PHOTO

months. The index edged up from a score of 4.2 in the third quarter of 2023 to 4.4 at the end of 2023.

Ireus director Qian Wenlan said: "Overall, Singapore's macroeconomic indicators are doing well, which barring unforeseen shocks, point to a healthy economy that could recover over the year ahead."

The improved sentiment in the first quarter was also due to a strong Singapore dollar that has helped to ease inflation, said Professor Qian.

Where industry players were most downbeat, in the prime residential sector, responses recorded a future net balance of minus 44 per cent versus minus 18 per cent in the previous quarter.

Professor Sing Tien Foo, provost's chair professor of real estate at NUS Business School, said: "The outlook of the prime residential

sector remains subdued. The additional buyer's stamp duty still impacts demand from foreign buyers and investors."

Despite that, real estate players do not see developers holding back new launches or reducing prices, although fewer respondents expected new launch prices to increase.

"Homebuyers have become more resistant to high price points and discerning amid ample new project options. While developers are expected to adopt sensitive pricing strategies, major price corrections are unlikely due to previously committed land and development costs," said the survey respondents.

Industry players were also pessimistic on the office sector.

Prof Sing said: "The work-from-home arrangement dampens of-

fice sentiment and encourages a flight to quality among firms."

About 73.5 per cent of the respondents flagged a slowdown in the global economy as the top risk to watch, down from 89.5 per cent during the last quarter. Another 55.9 per cent in the first quarter cited job losses/decline in the domestic economy as another major risk factor, versus 57.9 per cent of them who said so in the fourth quarter of 2023.

Concerns over rising inflation/interest rates ranked third among the top risks at 50 per cent, up from 44.7 per cent in the fourth quarter.

In the first quarter, property executives identified the tightening of financing/liquidity in the debt market as a potential risk, up from 42.1 per cent last quarter to 47.1 per cent. The increased supply of new

development land also raised more concerns, from 23.7 per cent in the fourth quarter to 29.4 per cent this quarter.

On the other hand, respondents were less concerned in the first quarter about rising costs of construction, excessive supply of new property launches, and government intervention to cool the market.

The risk of a real estate price bubble ranked the lowest, rising to 2.9 per cent in the first quarter from 2.6 per cent in the fourth quarter.

The Real Estate Sentiment Index is the result of a poll among senior executives involved in Singapore's real estate and development industry, and includes developers, consultants, financial institutions, professional firms and service providers. THE BUSINESS TIMES

Digital assets firm founded by SGX, Temasek to roll out funds ecosystem

Claire Huang
Senior Business Correspondent



Marketnode president Rehan Ahmed said Singapore is a big wealth hub in Asia featuring more players.

A digital assets firm founded by Singapore's investment company Temasek and bourse operator Singapore Exchange (SGX) could roll out to businesses its funds settlement infrastructure built on blockchain technology as soon as the second half of June.

Digital markets infrastructure operator Marketnode said it took about 12 months, instead of the typical three to five years, to build a commercially viable funds settlement platform called Fundnode.

In its pilot phase, the firm tested the platform for funds transaction management, processing and record-keeping.

At the upcoming launch, Fundnode will be operationally ready and have a network of partners, which then creates an ecosystem.

Marketnode president Rehan Ahmed told The Straits Times in an interview: "We don't just want to take the machine live and then see that there are no transactions happening. We want to be in a position where we announce to the market that we're not just live, we're also doing a certain amount of flow (transactions) on the platform on a daily basis."

Fundnode's network comprises fund managers, which create the products; and distributors, such as wealth managers, private banks and financial advisory firms, which purchase or sell those funds on behalf of clients.

"We are quite close to making our funds platform live over the next month or so. This is actually a true niche national market infrastructure," noted Mr Ahmed.

He said he hopes to announce

later in 2024 more strategic partners – financial institutions and infrastructure players – for the network.

The commercial launch of Fundnode comes almost two years since Marketnode first announced plans to set up a funds settlement platform in association with the Singapore Funds Industry Group.

Fundnode is one of two products developed by Marketnode, which was founded in 2021. The other product is Gateway, a one-stop issuance, tokenisation and asset-serving platform.

"We think that there is enough white space in capital markets and asset management, especially given that Singapore in Asia is a big wealth hub and more players are playing," Mr Ahmed said.

For Gateway, the firm is focused on taking programmable on-ledger assets live either in the last quarter of 2024 or the first quarter of 2025, he said.

The first native digital asset that Marketnode hopes to roll out on Gateway will be structured notes.

Tokenised credit products, such

as bonds and loans, would hopefully be next to be offered in the first quarter of 2025.

When asked about the key challenge of the business, Mr Ahmed said the hard part is building a network in the funds ecosystem.

"There's also a lot of demand for Asian capital markets products globally from investors sitting in Europe, Britain and the United States. So actually, for us, building via partnerships in a global distribution channel is the biggest challenge and the biggest opportunity as well," he said.

The team is looking closely at distribution partners to build a network that stretches from the East to the West.

"And this is where our Series A partnerships become quite important," Mr Ahmed said.

The firm recently announced the successful first close of its Series A investment round led by HSBC and Temasek, but did not disclose the amount raised. Series A is the next round of funding after seed funding.

The investment will help Marketnode scale up infrastructure across key asset classes, such as digital fixed-income and structured products, launch Fundnode, and roll out other tokenised asset offerings.

Without giving details, Mr Ahmed said the firm is looking at applying for a Singapore licence and that it would depend on the kinds of activities the company does.

The firm now has 35 employees based in Singapore. It is looking to expand its team to 40 to 45.

For a while, Marketnode's focus was digital bonds.

Marketnode and HSBC have been co-developing a digital market infrastructure covering credit, funds and structured products since 2020.

Both entities are participants in the Monetary Authority of Singapore's Project Guardian initiative, which explores the use of blockchain in institutional digital assets trading.

In August 2020, Marketnode's platform was used by SGX, HSBC Singapore and Temasek to issue Asia's first publicly syndicated digital bond for Olam International.

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Raffles Infrastructure ex-CEO reprimanded for listing rule breaches

The Listings Disciplinary Committee (LDC) of the Singapore Exchange (SGX) publicly reprimanded Mr Wu Xinhua, former executive chairman and chief executive officer of Raffles Infrastructure Holdings, for breaching listing rules.

This concerns the company's non-factual and misleading announcements on SGXNet between 2015 and 2018, including inflated cash balances in its financial statements.

The LDC also prohibited any issuer from appointing or reappointing Mr Wu as a director or executive officer, or both, for three years starting from May 31, 2024, the date when the LDC grounds of decision were published.

"The sanctions are the maximum sanctions that the LDC is empowered to impose against a director and/or executive officer pursuant to Mainboard Rule 1417(2)," said the committee.

The LDC noted that the decisions were based on the severity of the non-disclosures and misrepresentations, which amounted to "deliberate fraud on the market". This is on top of Mr Wu's lack of cooperation during investigations.

The committee noted that Mr Wu's violation of Mainboard Rule 703(4) caused the company to make false statements.

In Raffles Infrastructure's announcements and annual reports between November 2015 and November 2017, the company disclosed inflated cash balances.

Additionally, between November 2015 and November 2017, the company said that it had received claims related to products processed by Shishi Sinwa, its only operating subsidiary then. It also said that it had paid compensation to settle the claims.

Investigations later found that such claims did not exist, and the purported compensation was not made.

Mr Wu also caused the company to disclose a non-existing fixed deposit account held with Agricultural Bank of China in SGXNet announcements between April 2015 and August 2018.

By causing the company to "fail to have a robust and effective system of internal controls" that address financial, operational and compliance risks, Mr Wu breached Mainboard Rule 719(1). He also breached Mainboard Rule 720(1) by failing to demonstrate the character and integrity expected of a director of a listed issuer.

The LDC added that all the documents pertaining to the proceedings had been served on Mr Wu, which he had confirmed. The committee added that it was satisfied that Mr Wu had chosen not to respond, as opposed to being unaware of the charges against him.

Mr Wu was the company's executive chairman and CEO from July 2007 to October 2017. He then served as a non-independent, non-executive director of the company from October 2017 to March 2019.

Raffles Infrastructure Holdings, formerly China Fibretech, was founded by Mr Wu in 2007. It was listed on the SGX's mainboard in June 2008 and changed its name months after the listing. It is now an investment holding company principally engaged in the investment and management of infrastructure projects in Asia, based on the LDC's grounds of decision.

Trading in Raffles Infrastructure shares has been suspended since July 2023. THE BUSINESS TIMES



Dr. Owi S. Ruivivar has over 30 years of experience in investment strategy and portfolio management.

Bank of Singapore names ex-GIC executive as chief portfolio strategist

The Bank of Singapore (BOS) has named Dr Owi S. Ruivivar as its chief portfolio strategist, a new role to lead the development of a "systematic, robust and risk-based multi-asset allocation framework that will guide clients as they build long-term investment portfolios".

Dr Ruivivar joins the OCBC Bank subsidiary from Singapore sovereign wealth fund GIC, where she served as managing director for nearly five years until May 2024, after first joining as senior vice-president in September 2019.

On June 3, BOS said Dr Ruivivar will be a member of BOS' investment committee and will report to the group's global chief investment officer Jean Chia.

"Owi comes with vast experience and deep expertise, and I believe she will become an integral part of a strong and diverse team of investment professionals, further differentiating the bank's investment franchise," said Ms Chia of Dr Ruivivar's appointment, effective June 3.

BOS highlighted the former GIC executive as a seasoned investment manager with over 30 years of experience in economics, investment strategy and portfolio management.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University and PhD in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

During her time at GIC, Dr Ruivivar spearheaded investment-oriented thematic research at the economics and investment strategy department. She also led the state-owned investor's future-markets investing team, which oversaw multi-asset investments.

She is credited for launching the GIC Research Network, which built cross-departmental research communities to leverage insights across the company and scale ideas for the total portfolio's benefit.

Prior to joining GIC, Dr Ruivivar spent 17 years at Goldman Sachs Asset Management, where she was responsible for more than US\$60 billion (S\$81 billion) in assets as founding portfolio manager of its emerging-market debt franchise. THE BUSINESS TIMES

Seatrium, MI to explore 5G connectivity in yards

Seatrium has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with MI to enhance yard operations with 5G network.

This is part of Seatrium's digital strategy, which aims to establish a smart yard equipped with "future-proof ultra-high-speed connectivity", said the offshore and marine group on June 3.

The partnership aims to explore 5G connectivity within Seatrium's yards in Singapore. This would allow for a range of digital capabilities, such as smart video analytics and artificial intelligence, to enhance the group's overall operations.

Seatrium said the collaboration may also extend into other MI services, including internet of things applications, surveillance and cyber security, to support its operational needs.

Mr Chris Ong, chief executive of Seatrium, said this partnership marks a milestone in the group's digital transformation journey.

"By harnessing the advanced capabilities of 5G technology coupled with MI's robust enterprise solutions, we are committed to fostering innovation and enhancing efficiency throughout our operations and business processes," he added.

Shares of Seatrium closed three cents, or 1.7 per cent higher, at S\$1.79 on June 3. THE BUSINESS TIMES

Singapore factory activity expands for ninth consecutive month in May

Growth boosted by improvements in many segments, including new export orders

Colin Tan
Senior Business Correspondent

Manufacturing activity in Singapore expanded for the ninth consecutive month in May as it resumed a small, upward trajectory after stuttering somewhat in April amid weaker global growth.

The purchasing managers' index (PMI), a barometer of the manufacturing sector, rose to 50.6 points in May, up from April's 50.5 points, according to the latest data released by the Singapore Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management on June 3.

Meanwhile, the PMI for electronics, a key sector of manufacturing, rose to 51.1 points, up from 50.9 points in the month before.

Readings above 50 points denote growth, whereas those below 50 indicate contraction.

The overall expansion in manufacturing was boosted by improvements in many segments, including new export orders, output, and new orders.

Meanwhile, stocks of finished goods and employment experienced slower growth.

In contrast, both input prices for manufacturing along with supplier deliveries for the electronics sector slipped into contraction. Input price refers to the cost of all the things such as raw materials and services needed to manufacture a good.

Input prices for the electronics sector and supplier deliveries for overall manufacturing expanded at a slower pace.

Economists told The Straits Times that the PMI data continues to paint a positive outlook for the second half of the year.

Maybank economist Chua Hak Bin and UOB associate economist Jester Koh both felt that the manufacturing recovery remains intact, despite the recent weak readings for industrial production and exports, as well as the tepid electronics output in April.

OCBC Bank chief economist Selena Ling noted that the trajectory of the domestic PMI aligned with the expansion across the rest of the region, which included the positive readings in the China Caixin PMI, as well as in Indonesia, South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

On the easing of input prices, she said: "This first contraction could suggest a further resolution of existing supply-chain challenges."

Meanwhile, she attributed the slump in the supplier delivery gauge for electronics – following two months of expansion – to "heightened geopolitical tensions". These include attempts by the US to curb artificial intelligence (AI) chip exports to the Middle East on fears that they may be diverted to China, as well as the recent Chinese military exercises in the Taiwan Strait.

Ultimately, these factors could potentially stifle the sprouting of green shoots in the electronics sector in the near term, Ms Ling said.

Mr Koh suggested that the recent weakness in electronics pro-

duction could also reflect "some degree of temporary inventory digestion, as affirmed by the moderation in the stocks of finished goods".

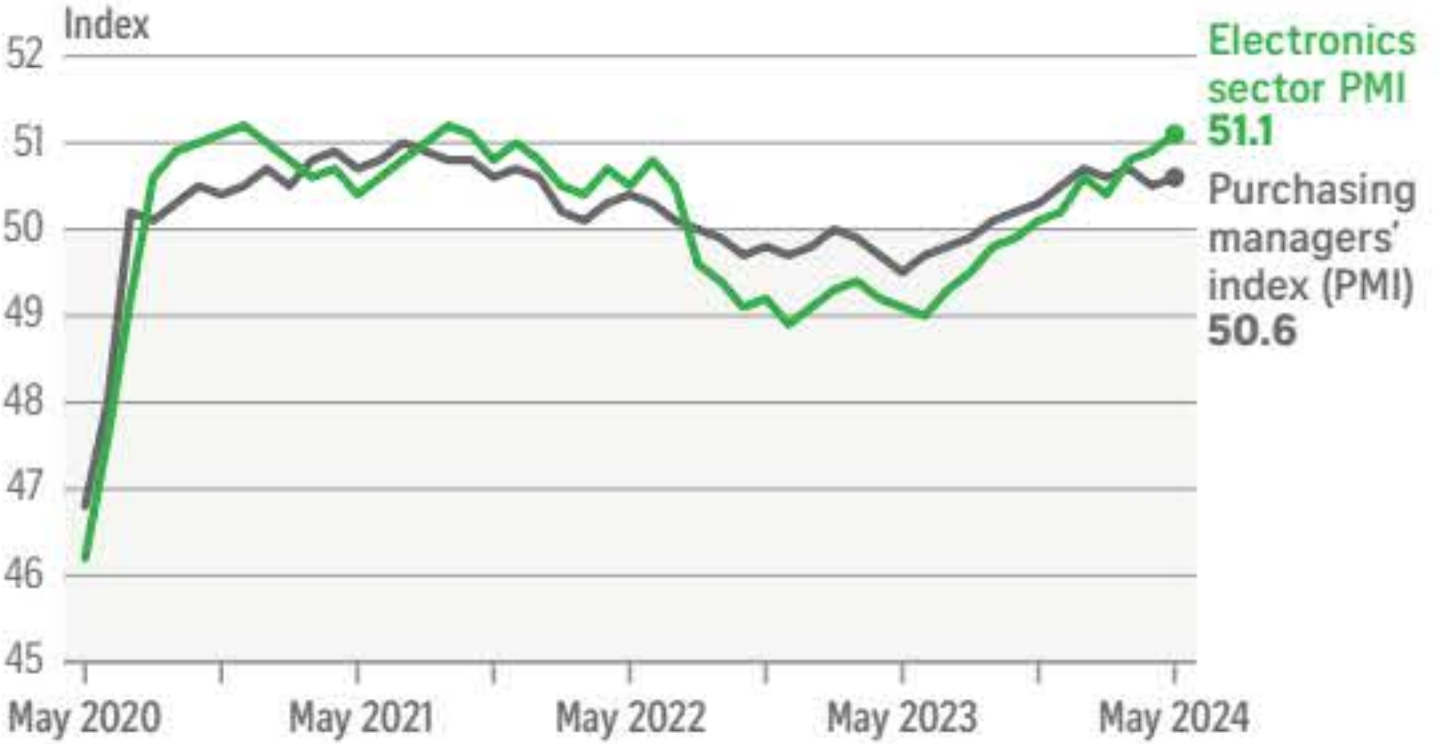
Looking ahead, he anticipated an easing of financial conditions towards the latter half of the year, "as central banks in advanced economies start to reduce policy rates, which could provide some tailwinds for global investment and consumption activity".

Dr Chua agreed, noting that the acceleration in the electronics PMI "signalled that the recovery in global demand is strengthening



The purchasing managers' index for electronics, a key sector of manufacturing, rose to 51.1 points in May, up from 50.9 points in the month before. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

Modest growth



NOTE: Index below 50 represents a contraction and anything above 50 is an expansion.
Source: SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF PURCHASING AND MATERIALS MANAGEMENT
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

and broadening, particularly to other segments, including consumer electronics and computer peripherals".

"Singapore's semiconductor ecosystem – less exposed to the global AI boom than North-East Asian economies – has been weighed down by the softening demand for automotive and industrial chips," he said.

Dr Chua also attributed the contraction in supplier deliveries to disruptions because of the Red Sea re-routing and port congestion, which could dampen the manufacturing recovery. "Export orders cannot be fulfilled if supplies of key components cannot be secured or face long delays."

Mr Koh said: "Supplier delivery times have likely risen as vessels were diverted around the Cape of Good Hope, away from the Red Sea, to avoid the ongoing conflicts."

In turn, the disruption in vessel arrival schedules at major ports around the world, coupled with off-schedule arrivals, has led to a "bunching effect", he added.

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Asia factory activity grows in May on robust global demand

TOKYO – Asian factory activity expanded in May as manufacturers benefited from broadening global demand, private surveys showed on June 3, adding to hopes for sustained economic recovery in the region where China is showing early signs of a rebound.

Manufacturing activity expanded in Japan for the first time in a year and in South Korea at the fastest pace in two years, due in part to hints of a pickup in the automobile and semiconductor sectors, the surveys showed.

China's private Caixin survey also showed factory activity rising at the fastest pace in about two years in May on strong production and new orders, offering hope of a broad-based recovery in Asia and elsewhere.

The robust readings point to recovery in the manufacturing sector underpinning Asian growth and cushioning the blow from any market volatility caused by uncertainty over the US monetary policy outlook.

Japan's final annual Jibun Bank manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose to 50.4 in May from 49.6 in April, having last climbed above the 50-point threshold – which separates growth from contraction in activity – in May 2023.

South Korea's PMI rose to 51.6 in May, the highest mark since May 2022 and coming after two months below the 50 mark, an S&P Global survey showed.

"South Korea's manufacturing sector appears to have caught a second wind," said Joe Hayes, principal economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

"Qualitative evidence from the survey also paints a promising forward-looking picture, with panelists commenting on new product launches providing them with a platform for sustainable

production expansion."

Adding to the bright signs, China's Caixin/S&P Global manufacturing PMI rose to 51.7 in May from 51.4 the previous month, the fastest pace since June 2022 and beating analysts' forecasts of 51.5.

The reading contrasts with an official survey on May 31 that surprised market participants by showing a fall in manufacturing activity, pointing to a mixed picture of the sprawling industry.

The upbeat private survey results compared with China's official manufacturing PMI published on May 31 showing factory activity unexpectedly contracted last month. The two surveys cover different sample sizes and types of businesses, with the Caixin poll focusing on smaller and export-oriented firms.

The accelerated expansion indicated by the private gauge could offset some concerns triggered by the official survey about weakening momentum in the manufacturing sector, which Beijing relies on to boost the economy this year.

Exporters saw new orders rising for the fifth straight month in May, albeit at a slower rate, the Caixin results showed, suggesting foreign demand held up for Chinese goods.

"China's economy is generally stable and remains on the road to recovery," said Mr Wang Zhe, senior economist at Caixin Insight Group. That said, pressure on employment and weaker demand than supply "remain prominent issues", he said.

"Policies aimed at stabilising the economy, boosting domestic demand and increasing employment need to be strengthened."

Manufacturing activity in May also expanded in Taiwan, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, private surveys showed. REUTERS, BLOOMBERG

VOLUNTARY UNCONDITIONAL GENERAL OFFER

for and on behalf of



Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited
(Incorporated in the Republic of Singapore)
(Company Registration No. 193200032W)

to acquire all the issued ordinary shares in the capital of



Great Eastern Holdings Limited
(Incorporated in the Republic of Singapore)
(Company Registration No. 199903008M)

other than those shares already owned or agreed to be acquired by the Offeror or its subsidiaries by



J.P. Morgan Securities Asia Private Limited
(Incorporated in the Republic of Singapore)
(Company Registration No. 197300590K)

Offer Price to shareholders of Great Eastern Holdings Limited

\$S\$25.60 IN CASH
For each Offer Share

CLOSING DATE

Acceptances should be received by **5.30 p.m. (Singapore time)** on **28 June 2024** (or such later date as may be announced from time to time by or on behalf of the Offeror).

About the Offer

As at the Latest Practicable Date, Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited (the "Offeror") owns approximately 88.44 per cent. of the issued ordinary shares ("Shares") in the capital of Great Eastern Holdings Limited ("GEH"). The Offer is for the remaining 11.56 per cent. of Shares not already owned or agreed to be acquired by the Offeror as at the date of the Offer.

If you wish to accept the Offer

1. If your Offer Shares are deposited with CDP

(Please use Form of Acceptance and Authorisation, or FAA, sent with the Notification)

By Post

Complete and return the FAA to:

Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited
c/o The Central Depository (Pte) Limited,
Robinson Road Post Office,
P.O. Box 1984,
Singapore 903934

(*In the enclosed pre-addressed envelope at your own risk)

Electronically

Complete and return the FAA via the SGX-ST's Investor Portal at:
investors.sgx.com
(in respect of individual and joint-alt account holders only)

2. If your Offer Shares are in scrip form

(Please use Form of Acceptance and Transfer, or FAT, sent with the Notification)

By Post

Complete and return the FAT to:

Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited
c/o Boardroom Corporate & Advisory Services Pte. Ltd.,
1 Harbourfront Avenue,
Keppel Bay Tower, #14-07,
Singapore 098632

(*In the enclosed pre-addressed envelope at your own risk)

By Hand

Complete and return the FAT to:

Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited
c/o Boardroom Corporate & Advisory Services Pte. Ltd.,
1 Harbourfront Avenue,
Keppel Bay Tower, #14-07,
Singapore 098632

The forms should arrive no later than 5.30 p.m. on 28 June 2024 (or such later date as may be announced from time to time by or on behalf of the Offeror).

Proof of posting is not proof of receipt by the Offeror at the above addresses.

If delivered by post, please use the pre-addressed envelope enclosed, which is pre-paid for posting in Singapore only.

If posting from outside Singapore, it is your responsibility to affix adequate postage.

3. If you are a CPFIS Investor and/or SRS Investor

You should receive further information on how to accept the Offer from your respective CPF Agent Banks and SRS Agent Banks. Please contact your respective CPF Agent Bank and SRS Agent Bank (as the case may be).

No action is required if you do not wish to accept the Offer.

The Offeror Intends to seek a delisting of GEH from the SGX-ST If It holds 90 per cent. or more of the Shares at the close of the Offer.

Shareholders who do not accept the Offer should note that in the event:

(i) GEH is delisted from the SGX-ST, such Shareholders will continue to hold their Shares and remain shareholders of GEH, but will not be able to trade such Shares on the SGX-ST; and

(ii) the trading of the Shares on the SGX-ST is suspended pursuant to Rules 724, 1105 or 1303(1) of the Listing Manual, such Shareholders will continue to hold their Shares and remain shareholders of GEH but, pursuant to Rule 729 of the Listing Manual, will not be able to transfer such Shares without the prior approval of the SGX-ST.

All capitalised terms used and not defined herein shall have the same meanings given to them in the Offer Document.

Important Notice

The information in this advertisement is a summary of the Offer and is qualified by, and should be read in conjunction with, the full information contained in the Offer Document. In the event of any inconsistency or conflict between the terms of this advertisement and the Offer Document, the terms set out in the Offer Document shall prevail.

The views of the directors of GEH who are considered independent for the purposes of the Offer ("Independent Directors") and the independent financial adviser to the Independent Directors on the Offer will be made available to you in due course. You may wish to consider their views before taking action in relation to the Offer.

Responsibility Statement

The Offeror Directors (including any director who may have delegated detailed supervision of the preparation of this advertisement) have taken all reasonable care to ensure that the facts stated and opinions expressed in this advertisement are fair and accurate and that there are no other material facts not contained in this advertisement, the omission of which would make any statement in this advertisement misleading, and they jointly and severally accept full responsibility.

Where any information has been extracted or reproduced from published or otherwise publicly available sources or obtained from GEH, the sole responsibility of the Offeror Directors has been to ensure through reasonable enquiries that such information is accurately and correctly extracted from such sources and/or reflected or reproduced in this advertisement in its proper form and context.

For more help

Any inquiries relating to the Offer should be directed during office hours to:

J.P. Morgan Securities Asia Private Limited
Telephone: +65 6882 2621

BUSINESS

Online



COMMENTARY Tempering workaholism

Flexible work arrangements were the stuff of dreams till recently. Now that they are a reality, they may just be the cure to Singapore's workaholism.

str.sg/singapore-workaholism

Chip industry • Nvidia puts generative AI front and centre | A17

Real estate market • Execs pessimistic over prime residential property | A18

PMI • S'pore factory activity expands again in May | A19

Bursa Malaysia courts young firms and investors in bid to rejuvenate local stock market

It aims to list 42 firms in 2024, including those in emerging sectors like medical tech

Kang Wan Chern
Deputy Business Editor

Malaysia's stock exchange wants to list more small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as it takes steps to bring younger companies, as well as a new generation of investors, to the local stock market, a senior executive at the bourse said.

As Malaysia's economy and the fund-raising outlook improve, Bursa Malaysia is aiming to list 42 companies in 2024, which will be a high compared with the 32 firms that launched initial public offerings (IPOs) on the exchange in 2023 and the 35 that did so in 2022, chief executive Muhamad Umar Swift told The Straits Times recently.

This comes at a time when the IPO markets in Asia, particularly in China, Hong Kong and Singapore, have yet to bounce back after falling to a low in recent years.

In the first quarter of the year, the Asia-Pacific recorded 119 IPO deals that raised US\$5.8 billion (S\$7.8 billion) in proceeds, compared with 175 deals and US\$12.7 billion raised in the same period in 2023, according to EY.

But Mr Umar noted that Malaysia is backed by a growing real economy, and foreign investors have been returning to the market.

Local investor confidence is picking up too. Malaysia's economy expanded by 4.2 per cent in the first quarter of the year, faster than expected, driven by private spending and a rebound in exports.

The country's benchmark stock index is up by more than 20 per cent since January, closing at

1,596.68 on May 31. Meanwhile, shares of Bursa Malaysia have jumped by 22 per cent since May.

In fact, Malaysia's IPO market has been one of the most active in the region, with 19 listings since the start of the year, compared with just one in Singapore.

Mr Umar added that some of the 42 IPOs targeted are in emerging sectors such as those offering medical technology, including in-vitro fertilisation, or IVF, and represent "interesting new areas for the exchange".

A higher number of IPOs in Malaysia can potentially also benefit other exchanges such as Singapore's over the longer term, as some listed firms could seek secondary listings on the Singapore Exchange (SGX) for greater exposure, experts said.

Malaysian companies that have secondary listings on the SGX include glove maker Top Glove, IHH Healthcare, oil palm plantation TSH Resources and Malaysia Smelting Corp.

Still, hitting the 2024 IPO target will not be easy, with firms still likely to hold back on going public due to high interest rates and low valuations as well as political uncertainty within the country.

Mr Umar agreed that more must be done.

"We have been seeing the fixed deposit pool in Malaysia growing since 2018, so we need to mobilise some of those funds and channel them back to the equity markets to get new businesses moving."

To encourage more companies to list, Bursa Malaysia and the country's capital markets regulator shortened the approval time for IPOs on both the Main and Ace markets to three months from four to 12 months starting from March. In comparison, the IPO



To encourage more firms to list, Bursa Malaysia and the country's capital markets regulator cut the approval time for initial public offerings on the Main and Ace markets to three months from four to 12 months. PHOTO: THE BUSINESS TIMES

process for SGX takes around four months.

The Main Market of Bursa Malaysia is the prime market for established companies, while the Ace Market is designed for growth companies. A third board, the Leap Market, is for accredited investors.

The exchange is getting more actively involved in identifying young and promising SMEs with funding needs, and taking a more aggressive approach to help them prepare for an eventual listing.

In December 2023, Bursa Malaysia and credit ratings firm RAM Holdings launched a debt fundraising platform for SMEs, allowing them to raise debt funding of up to RM5 million (S\$1.4 million) over a minimum tenure of one year.

Besides giving such companies alternative access to debt to do business, the intent is also to establish relationships and build trust with the business owners to understand their longer-term growth plans and funding needs.

"The question we put to them is, are you looking to offer your company for sale or raise capital? If it is to raise capital through a listing, we want that listing to be with us," Mr Umar said.

At the same time, Bursa Malaysia is also rolling out strategies to attract a new generation of investors to encourage more depth and liquidity on the exchange over the long term.

A liquid market allows transactions to be completed quickly and at stable prices. Companies with liquid stocks can also draw more investors, enhancing their ability to raise capital.

"Younger investors have different ways of investing and most of them don't quite understand equities, or see the amount needed to invest as too huge. We want to demystify investing in equities for this generation."

In February, financial technology company Futu Holdings was given a licence to launch its online trading platform Moomoo in Malaysia, enabling account holders to invest in some 1,000 Malaysia

A higher number of initial public offerings in Malaysia can potentially also benefit other exchanges such as Singapore's over the longer term, as some listed firms could seek secondary listings on the Singapore Exchange (SGX) for greater exposure, experts said. Malaysian companies that have secondary listings on the SGX include glove maker Top Glove, IHH Healthcare, oil palm plantation TSH Resources and Malaysia Smelting Corp.

stocks through a mobile app.

The platform also provides access to educational materials, such as beginner-friendly tutorials on fundamental investing, in the hopes of luring younger investors and those new to stocks.

These developments come after regulators in September 2023 allowed the fractional trading of shares on Bursa Malaysia to make share trading more accessible and affordable for retail investors, particularly younger ones.

A fractional share is a portion of a stock that is less than one standard board lot of 100 units.

As part of an effort to rebrand itself as a multi-asset exchange and offer more products to investors, Bursa Malaysia in January also launched a digital gold trading app that allows investors to buy and sell physical gold with an initial investment of RM10 using their mobile phones.

"By giving them new products that are easy to use, we can engage with younger investors, and potentially introduce new stock trading ideas to them as we build up trust and begin to understand their needs," said Mr Umar.

PwC in a January equity markets report said: "We expect the IPO market in Malaysia for the year 2024 to remain at least the same level as in the year 2023 and to continue to be dominated by Ace Market listings in terms of number of IPO deals."

"The capital market initiatives introduced by the Malaysian regulators will further boost the competitiveness and attractiveness of new listings in Malaysia."

wanchernkang@sph.com.sg

SSB Singapore Savings Bonds

Website: www.mas.gov.sg/ssb/

Hotline: 6225 5577

Application for Singapore Savings Bonds

The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) invites individuals to apply for the next issue of Singapore Savings Bonds (Savings Bonds):

Issuance date ¹	01 July 2024
Maturity date ¹	01 July 2034
Maximum amount offered ²	\$1,100,000,000
Issue Code	GX24070S
Coupon payment dates ¹	01 July and 01 January
Minimum application	\$500
Individual limit across all issues	\$200,000

You may apply for this issue from **6.00pm, 03 June 2024 till 9.00pm, 25 June 2024**. You may apply via DBS/POSB, OCBC and UOB ATMs (cash applications only) and Internet Banking (cash or Supplementary Retirement Scheme (SRS) applications), and OCBC's mobile application (cash or SRS applications). These channels will be open between 7.00am and 9.00pm from Mondays to Saturdays, excluding Public Holidays.

Interest Payment Schedule

Year*	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th
Coupon, %	3.26	3.26	3.26	3.26	3.26	3.26	3.29	3.38	3.42	3.42
Average annual return, %**	3.26	3.26	3.26	3.26	3.26	3.26	3.26	3.28	3.29	3.30

*From issue date **At the end of each year, on a compounded basis

This bond will be reflected as **"SBJUL24 GX24070S"** in your CDP statement or **"GX24070S"** in your SRS statement. Interest and principal payments will be paid to the bank account linked to CDP (for cash investments) or SRS account (for SRS investments). Interest income on Savings Bonds is exempt from tax, and Savings Bonds may not be sold, transferred or pledged without MAS' prior approval. Holders of existing Savings Bonds may submit redemption requests by **9.00pm, 25 June 2024**. The bonds will be redeemed on **01 July 2024**.¹

This document is for informational purposes only and does not constitute the terms of issue for this Savings Bond. By subscribing to this Savings Bond, you shall be deemed to have understood, accepted, and be bound by, the terms of issue for the Savings Bonds on the date of issuance of the Savings Bond to you. For the complete terms of issue, please refer to the public notice dated 03 June 2024 at the following link: <http://www.mas.gov.sg/ssb/>.

¹If MAS' electronic payment system is not in operation on this date, then issuance, interest payment or redemption, as the case may be, will occur on the next day when the electronic payment system is in operation.

²If total applications exceed this amount, MAS will distribute the total amount on offer as evenly as possible, and some individuals may not receive the full amount they applied for.

OPINION

Zelensky in Singapore: Why it's gloves off on China

Ukrainian leader's presence at the Shangri-La Dialogue is part of a broader diplomatic campaign at a critical juncture of the war.



Jonathan Eyal
Global Affairs Correspondent

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's arrival in Singapore on June 1 may seem surprising; with the war raging at home, one would have thought that he had more pressing priorities than traversing the earth.

Yet the Ukrainian leader's presence at the Shangri-La Dialogue made perfect sense.

It comes at another historic inflection point in his country's fight for survival. It is also a stark illustration of an enduring reality: The war in Ukraine has global ramifications, well and beyond what may still appear to some as just a scrap for possession of a bit of European territory.

Mr Zelensky's pointed criticism of China's attitude and behaviour towards his country represented a marked departure from Ukraine's previous stance. And it serves as just a precursor for greater tensions in Sino-Western confrontations in the months ahead.

As often happens with long-term wars, public opinion becomes inured to the pain and suffering. But the reality is that beyond the image of a seemingly never-ending war of attrition, the balance of power has tilted against Ukraine.

The chief reason for this downturn is the political dithering in the United States

about providing military help. That problem is now resolved, with the US Congress finally approving President Joe Biden's request for a massive US\$61 billion (S\$82.3 billion) worth of military aid to Ukraine.

But there is a price to be paid for the eight months of supply delays, and the Ukrainians are paying it with their blood.

The absence of adequate Ukrainian air defences means that Russian jets are now able to get closer to the fighting and hit targets more accurately.

And the Russians have added wings and guidance systems to their so-called FAB500 bombs – airdropped monsters containing over 500kg of explosives – and are now using them as “glide bombs”, launched from behind Russian lines on Ukrainian targets with devastating effect.

The Patriot anti-aircraft missile systems that Ukraine desperately needs are in short supply and expensive, at around US\$1 billion per battery. Therefore, it is improbable that Ukraine will regain complete control of its airspace before early 2025.

Matters will look much better for Ukraine beyond early 2025.

Contrary to what Russian President Vladimir Putin assumed, there is no indication that Western countries are getting tired of the war.

This is partly because European electorates continue to express sympathy for the plight of millions of Ukrainians who sought refuge in neighbouring countries and partly because Russia continues to make it clear that its objective is to change the whole power equation in Europe, thereby threatening more countries than just Ukraine.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky leaving Shangri-La hotel on June 2. Beyond the image of a seemingly never-ending war of attrition, the balance of power has tilted against Ukraine, says the writer. ST PHOTO: SHINTARO TAY

It is noticeable, for instance, that far-right European political parties that used to favour Russia are no longer doing so.

Far-right Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, for instance, is a Ukraine stalwart supporter. And even France's anti-immigrant National Rally now supports a pro-Ukraine policy.

Furthermore, although the Russians are spending large amounts of money on their military – up to 40 per cent of the Russian annual budget now goes to the country's defence industries, an investment equivalent to a staggering 8 per cent of Russia's gross domestic product – the longer Russia has to bear this burden, the more difficult it will become for Mr Putin to sustain it.

The Russians also appear to have made some strategic logistical errors: They have decided, for instance, to spend more on ammunition and less on the manufacture of new artillery guns.

The assumption among Western intelligence analysts is, therefore, that once the Russians exhaust their old stocks of weapons from Soviet days – as they currently are doing at breakneck speed – Russia will find it difficult to sustain the war at its current level of intensity.

BUYING TIME WITH A TWO-TRACK STRATEGY

For many Western military planners, therefore, the chief challenge is to win time by blunting the Russian advances until early 2025.

This is to be achieved through two strategies: taking the war to Russian territory and, second, limiting Russia's ability to import raw materials and dual-use technologies currently feeding the country's arms industries.

The US will continue to impose restrictions on how the weapons it supplies are being used by the Ukrainians; some of America's more sophisticated guidance systems have been tweaked explicitly so the Ukrainians cannot use them to strike deep inside Russia. Nonetheless, there is now general agreement in Western capitals that Ukraine's military should be allowed to hit Russian military infrastructure that supports its invasion.

The successive destruction of a number of Russian radar installations over the past two weeks is the first manifestation of this new approach.

Attention is now turning to the other pillar of this policy – restricting Russia's ability to source the materials it needs for its military from abroad.

Western governments accept that China is not the only supplier of such materials. Clearly, China is not obliged to observe any embargo on Russia.

However, what many Western governments are now determined to stop is Beijing's apparent ability to have its cake and eat it by claiming that China remains “impartial” in the crisis while acting as Russia's chief economic supporter.

US intelligence estimates indicate that in the last quarter of 2023, China provided Russia with more than 70 per cent of its nearly US\$900 million worth of imports of machine tools needed to build missiles and up to 90 per cent of Russia's microelectronics needs, crucial for the production of missiles, tanks and aircraft.

The Americans are determined that China will either be forced to restrict this trade or pay the price in diplomatic and economic terms. Mr Kurt Campbell, the US Deputy Secretary of State and America's top “Asia hand”, travelled to Brussels in late May to brief the Europeans on this matter and ask for their support.

Meanwhile, Mr Wally Adeyemo, the US Deputy Treasury Secretary and the man widely credited with inventing America's current economic sanctions regime, was dispatched in late May to

Germany to prepare Europe for the imposition of broader sanctions on China.

“We must make the choice stark for China: Chinese firms can either do business in our economies or they can equip Russia's war machine with dual-use goods. They cannot do both,” Mr Adeyemo told a gathering of policymakers.

Until now, Mr Zelensky has been careful not to signal in public his displeasure with China because he believed that Beijing's influence in the conflict could be helpful. So, he expressed satisfaction each time Chinese President Xi Jinping contacted him, notwithstanding the fact that such contacts remained rare and, on the whole, content-free.

The Ukrainian leader was also careful to remind Beijing of the longstanding military links between the two countries; after all, China's first aircraft carrier was bought from Ukraine and, before the war, Chinese engineers were still keen to cooperate with Ukraine on the production of jet engines.

Yet the gloves are now off.

Mr Zelensky's trip to Singapore indicates that the Ukrainian leader has abandoned sweet-talking. In Singapore, Mr Zelensky not only claimed he had evidence that China was assisting Moscow's war efforts, but he also pointedly said that this contradicted a promise that Mr Xi made to him in a phone call a year ago that Beijing would not get involved in the Ukraine war.

He also decried China's repeated unwillingness to talk to Ukraine despite Beijing's claims to be impartial.

“Many times we have wanted to meet Chinese representatives,” he said. “Unfortunately, Ukraine does not have any powerful connections with China because China does not want it.”

PEACE CONFERENCE PROJECT

Yet beyond fingering China as increasingly an actor in the Ukraine war, Mr Zelensky's visit to Singapore was part of a broader Ukrainian diplomatic offensive to the so-called Global South and other nations in Asia, which may have initially condemned Russia's invasion, but since then did their best to stay out of the handling of the conflict.

The Ukrainians acknowledge that they should have done more to engage with such nations.

That's why Ukraine is now spending some of its scarce financial resources on expanding its network of embassies and why President Zelensky is venturing beyond the traditional circle of his country's supporters.

Since the Russian invasion in February 2022, the Ukrainian leader has undertaken 50 foreign trips. Still, only a handful of these were outside Europe, and only one was to Asia beyond the Middle East, which was a trip to Japan in 2023. Mr Zelensky's presence in Singapore and his subsequent travel to the Philippines are indications of a

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COMMENTARY
Zelensky in Asia

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky was welcomed like a rock star at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore over the weekend, but will his message gain any real traction?

str.sg/zelensky-visit

Shangri-La Dialogue 2024

US dumps the megaphone, China speaks to two audiences

Seeking wider support for peace and dialogue



China's Defence Minister Dong Jun said at the Shangri-La Dialogue on June 2 that Beijing "is committed to promoting equal rights, equal rules and equal opportunities". And while he decried hegemonism, decoupling and bloc confrontation, he stopped short of mentioning the US by name. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Countries refrained from calling China out by name, but it does not mean anxieties have dissipated.



Lin Suling
Senior Columnist

Call it a blessing of omission. You would not have guessed it from reading headlines, but there is a palpable shift in approach, with other countries appearing to pare back their bashing of China. At least by name.

Chalk it up to the water at the Shangri-La in Singapore, perhaps. It seems to have tempered aggression.

When US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin was asked at the Asia Security Summit on the morning of June 1 point blank about his discussions with Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun, he declined to give details. The reason he was asked? China was unmistakably missing from his speech at the event, typically a strongly worded one aimed at holding China accountable for regional adventurism.

The omission seemed deliberate – even shared. Philippine President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr similarly declined to wag the finger at China in his speech the night before, which was chock full of talk about assertive actions propagating baseless claims through force, intimidation and deception. The one time he mentioned China by name, he employed broader platitudes in highlighting its influence over the security and economic situation in South-east Asia.

U.S. DITCHES THE MEGAPHONE DIPLOMACY

These developments come as a welcome relief, as tensions between the two superpowers have ratcheted up in recent months and regional temperatures ticked upwards. Atmospheric in the larger

bilateral relations remained poor after the US slapped tariffs on Chinese goods and threatened to ban TikTok. Meanwhile, China has projected a more muscular military stance these past weeks. It ramped up drills around Taiwan, bolstered forces off the Second Thomas Shoal, and revealed more of what appears to be its first drone carrier.

It is also a far cry from three years ago when the deterioration of the relationship went on full public display in Anchorage, Alaska, in the US. The raw exchange of accusations between the most senior diplomats of the two countries meeting for the first time since President Joe Biden assumed power in the White House was not only an inauspicious start to a new era of superpower relations, but also a harbinger of worsening ties.

Today, US-China relations are at best fragile – derailed easily by a balloon or a publicised visit to Taiwan. It’s just not made of the same stuff that withstood a 2001 air collision and a 1999 bombing of a Chinese embassy in Belgrade, something Chinese President Xi Jinping might have intended to signal in visiting the site while in Europe in May.

There is a growing self-awareness in US foreign policy circles of the superpower’s limitations. The US remains influential and powerful yet is incredibly stretched. Last week brought fresh news from President Biden fronting a new ceasefire proposal in Gaza and easing restrictions on Ukrainian use of US weapons on targets in Russia.

Mr Austin’s measured tone and rhetoric suggests a recalibration of American declaratory geopolitics and a rare acknowledgement of the pointlessness of drama. Tackling two theatres is sufficiently challenging so why court challenges in a third? A US National Defence Strategies paper in January made clear the American military is not even designed to fight wars against two major rivals simultaneously.

What set the stage for this shift? “Intensive diplomacy”, a

term coined by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan to describe the series of US high-level communications and visits to China involving Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo in 2023.

Mr Sullivan himself had quietly met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi thrice in a year – in Vienna, Malta and Bangkok – to thrash out an agenda for cooperation and hold frank and direct strategic conversations.

When asked about his meetings with Mr Wang and what they discussed regarding Taiwan, Mr Sullivan struck a tone of conciliation. He said: “It was a very useful, direct, and candid set of conversations.”

“I’ll be cautious... this (issue of Taiwan) is littered with landmines to speak about publicly. I want to respect the discretion of the channel,” he said during a Council on Foreign Relations fireside chat in January.

CHINESE RHETORIC, ASIAN REALITY

China’s initial stance at the Shangri-La Dialogue, however, lagged the shift away from megaphone diplomacy. Firing an opening salvo on May 31, former ambassador to the US Cui Tiankai raised the spectre of Washington dividing the region by forming blocs.

Mid-level People’s Liberation Army officials deployed to the conference raised loaded questions. They accused the US of starting Nato-like groups in Asia and suggested Nato expansion caused the Ukraine crisis. To Philippine President Marcos’ keynote speech, they pointed to Manila’s own problematic actions in the South China Sea.

By June 2, however, there was a pullback by Admiral Dong, who struck a statesmen-like tone in exhorting the value of peace, the importance of common development and the need for countries to find ways to get along with one another.

“We’re committed to promoting equal rights, equal rules and equal opportunities,” he said. While he decried hegemonism, decoupling and bloc confrontation, he stopped short

of mentioning the US by name.

The discrepancy in words between a more conciliatory China and another that seeks to talk tough can be jarring. But the reality is that China must reach two audiences with its messages – demonstrating to a domestic public that it has done its patriotic duty to stand up to the West and its “Cold War mentality”, while being mindful of appearing belligerent and unreasonable to an international audience.

Some pointed to the disconnect between Adm Dong’s words and Chinese actions. From supporting North Korea and Russia while declaring support for non-proliferation, to claiming to desire peace while taking aggressive action in the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait and cyberspace, how can we trust China, the audience asked Adm Dong.

THE DUALITY OF A RISING CHINA

In recent years, China’s participation in the Shangri-La Dialogue has become a certainty and morphed into an important exercise for its defence establishment, with experts, ministry spokesmen and embassy staff fronting doorstops, interviews and roundtables to shape the narrative.

An optimistic interpretation is that this growing sophistication of its diplomacy apparatus suggests a maturing power that understands it must account for its actions, which is to be welcomed. A less charitable take is that China has no intention of changing course and simply wishes to assuage concerns on the surface and desensitise regional countries.

Whatever the case, China must understand it is not a small state. Its assertiveness – in the South China Sea, in economic coercion and in diplomatic rhetoric – has outsized impact and creates alarm against the backdrop of its unstoppable growth and continuing rise.

For what will happen if China reaches the limits of restraint? Will it believe that might is right and impose its interests on others? And if China does this today, what more will it do when it is more militarily powerful and unhappy in 10 to 20 years?

China will always arouse

anxieties by virtue of its size, proximity and weight, Singapore’s former foreign affairs official Bilahari Kausikan said during The Straits Times’ Asian Insider podcast last week. But South-east Asian countries are pragmatic and clear-eyed, seeing it also as an economic opportunity, he pointed out. Most have China as their largest trading partner.

This duality is revealed in studies like the 2024 edition of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute’s survey of South-east Asia where respondents agree that China remains the most influential economic power but do not trust it to do the right thing when global peace and stability are at stake, he added.

This economic cooperation between China and Asian neighbours will be more robust if underpinned by a sturdy broader relationship, then Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said at the Boao Forum in 2023.

Progress on outstanding bilateral and regional issues, like the code of conduct on the South China Sea, can build trust and encourage countries to do more on the economic front at a time of slowing global growth.

A DESIRED DE-ESCALATION

Overall, the clear desire for a de-escalation of US-China tensions is a positive development. Here, credit must go to increasing recognition of the merit of platforms like the Shangri-La Dialogue for countries to publicly clarify their positions and meet their counterparts bilaterally.

Direct engagement at the leadership level allows for issues to be thrashed out directly instead of communication of intent by showmanship, brinkmanship or other means. This convening power extends to groupings led by Asean that provide fixtures in the calendar bringing the US Secretary of Defence and the Chinese Defence Minister together like the Asean Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus.

But accommodating China’s rise and tackling the corresponding regional anxieties over its intentions remain works in progress. Perhaps having more of that water at Shangri-La in Singapore will help.

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FROM B1

broadening of Ukraine’s diplomatic offensive.

The same applies to the conference project devoted to finding a peaceful solution to the war, scheduled to take place later in June in Switzerland.

Mr Zelensky conceived the conference precisely because he was eager to refute claims that Ukraine is not interested in peace and that it allows itself to be used as a pawn in a broader proxy war between the West and Russia, the sort of arguments one often hears in Global South capitals.

The Ukrainian President is very keen to get the broadest possible participation of heads of state and governments at the conference, and the Swiss hosts of the event have been very clear that countries can attend without having to comply with any preconditions. Thus, those taking part do not need to express prior support for Ukraine or any Western position in this conflict; participants merely have to believe that peace is possible and that dialogue is better than fighting, two propositions everyone supposedly agrees with.

Mr Zelensky fully expected Russia’s refusal to attend the conference. However, the Ukrainian leader was surprised by China’s reasons for its refusal. Beijing’s official line is that China could participate only if the conference discussed all peace proposals – including Russia’s – “in a fair and equal manner”, as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning put it.

But what Ms Mao did not say is that Russia’s “peace proposal” consists of demanding that before it even participates in the Swiss conference, Ukraine must formally accept that the 20 per cent of Ukrainian territory now occupied by Russia is lost forever. So, in effect, what the Chinese are saying is that Beijing’s concept of a “fair and equal” conference is one in which the Russians must be allowed to demand from the start the formal loss of Ukrainian territory before any serious negotiations even begin.

Mr Zelensky is particularly angered by the evidence he claims to have that quite apart from refusing to attend, China is also trying to persuade other nations not to go. “China, unfortunately, is working hard today to prevent countries from coming to the peace summit,” he told reporters on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue.

It remains to be seen whether the Ukrainian President’s trip to Asia will improve his country’s diplomatic fortunes. Mr Zelensky knows that try as hard as he may, few countries outside Europe and North America are likely to be persuaded to sacrifice their relationships with China or Russia in support of Ukraine, even if they initially condemned Russia’s invasion of a neighbouring sovereign nation.

Still, the Zelensky trip to Singapore does signify a critical turning point in the Ukraine crisis. It marks the moment when Ukraine and its Western allies have decided to abandon their previous policy of privately urging the Chinese to cease supporting Russia.

From now on, the objective is to impose an economic and political price on Beijing for its continued links with Russia.

Expect more on this topic in the months to come.

And expect Mr Zelensky to continue reminding us that what happens in Europe does not stay in Europe.

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Why we now face higher risk of a S. China Sea clash

The chances of a US-China war starting around Second Thomas Shoal are now perhaps as high as the chances of one starting in the Taiwan Strait.



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr of the Philippines set the tone for a tense weekend in the opening session of this year's Shangri-La Dialogue on May 31. His prepared keynote speech began with a bold declaration of his country's determination to defend its claims in the South China Sea against Chinese pressure. Then, in answering a blunt question from the audience, he did not shy away from what that might mean. He was asked about a scenario in which Chinese Coast Guard water cannon killed a Filipino sailor in a South China Sea clash, and "would that cross a red line" leading Manila to invoke its mutual defence treaty with Washington and – by clear implication – lead to war. His response was blunt. "Once we get to that point," he replied, "certainly we would have crossed the Rubicon... Almost certainly it's going to be a red line." This reply highlighted how dangerous the confrontation

between China and the Philippines over their conflicting claims in the South China Sea – especially around Second Thomas Shoal – has become. That is because this is no longer just a dispute between Manila and Beijing. In recent months, in response to escalating Chinese actions, the United States and its allies have been drawn deeper and deeper into the contest in support of the Philippines. As a result, the stakes there are now far higher than the ownership of an uninhabitable reef or the future of the rusting hulk that symbolises the Philippine claim to it. It has become the latest test of strength and resolve in the contest between the US and China over which of them will be the leading power in East Asia and the Western Pacific in the decades ahead. That makes the risk of a clash there quite high, and the consequences very serious indeed. The chances of a US-China war starting around Second Thomas Shoal are now perhaps as high as the chances of one starting in the Taiwan Strait. This was not necessarily the message that President Marcos wanted to convey with his big speech in the evening. While he expressed spirited defiance of China, he tried to avoid siding too overtly with America. He

acknowledged China's "determining influence over the security situation and the economic evolution of this region" as "a permanent fact", as well as welcomed "the stabilising presence of the United States" as "crucial to regional peace". "It's never a choice. Both countries are important," he concluded. He decried "the danger of regional regression towards Cold War thinking" and proclaimed that the future of the region should "be driven not by one or two powerful countries, but by all of us". He argued instead for the centrality of Asean as the driver of a new regional order. But the whole tone of this year's Shangri-La Dialogue, as well as his own "red line" remarks, showed how far Mr Marcos' rose-tinted vision is from the real strategic dynamics of East Asia today. Though they disagreed about much else at the conference, both the US and China concurred in seeing the region as increasingly facing a Cold War style of polarisation, with a growing band of allies and partners aligning with Washington against Beijing's challenge to the old US-led regional order. What Chinese representatives decried as the creation of an "Asia-Pacific version of Nato" which was "tying the region's countries to the US war chariot", US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin praised as a "new convergence around nearly all aspects of security in the Indo-Pacific" by countries throughout the region. In fact, both the US and China

are exaggerating somewhat. Most countries in the region – especially among Asean members – are determined to avoid picking sides between Washington and Beijing, and the prospect of a broad-based Nato-style regional alliance supporting America against China remains as remote as ever. Indeed, it is America's failure to garner strong support from other Asean members – along with its desire to secure access to bases close to China and a potential Taiwan theatre of war – that has driven Washington to back Manila so strongly in its disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea. This is new. Back in 2012, when China seized control of Scarborough Shoal from the Philippines, the US pointedly refused Manila's request to come to its aid. In recent months, President Joe Biden has repeatedly and unambiguously declared that America's commitment to the defence of the Philippines, including the South China Sea, is "ironclad". And, unlike Mr Biden's apparently off-the-cuff comments about defending Taiwan, these declarations have been reaffirmed in explicit detail by the State Department. In March, its spokesman stated that "the United States reaffirms that Article IV of the 1951 US-Philippines Mutual Defence Treaty extends to armed attacks on Philippine armed forces, public vessels or aircraft – including those of its Coast Guard – anywhere in the South China Sea". This leaves no doubt at all that in the event of the kind of incident in the South China Sea that Mr Marcos spoke of as crossing Manila's "red line", the US would be compelled to undertake military operations against China in support of the Philippines. If Washington failed to do so, its strategic credibility as a reliable ally in Asia and beyond, and hence its claims to regional and global leadership, would be very seriously and perhaps fatally damaged. What is more, the US has led its closest regional allies, Japan and Australia, down the same path. In April, Mr Biden hosted an

unprecedented trilateral summit with Mr Marcos and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to show support for Manila against Beijing, and soon after, the defence ministers of the three countries, along with Australia's, met in Hawaii for the same purpose. Meanwhile, Australia and Japan, as well as America, have stepped up naval deployments and exercises with the Philippines. This is a long way short of an "Asian Nato", but it is nonetheless an unprecedented display of willingness by America's regional allies to confront China's military in support of Washington where their own immediate interests are not directly engaged. Their credibility as reliable allies in American eyes is now at stake if a crisis erupts between the Philippines and China over Second Thomas Shoal. All this carries very serious risks, not despite but because of the relatively trivial issue that will be the spark for a conflict. Compared with the momentous historical, political, economic and strategic issues directly at stake in Taiwan, it is hard to believe that either America or China will really go to war over Second Thomas Shoal. But therein lies the trap. As each side can so easily assume that the other would back down rather than fight over a

Though they disagreed about much else at the conference, both the US and China concurred in seeing the region as increasingly facing a Cold War style of polarisation, with a growing band of allies and partners aligning with Washington against Beijing's challenge to the old US-led regional order.

barren reef, both will be strongly tempted to flex their muscles and tout their resolve. In fact, that is exactly what they are doing, China by its aggressive coast guard manoeuvres, and America by its ringing declarations of alliance commitment. But whereas the US hopes that China will be deterred by Mr Biden's promise to fight for the Philippines, Beijing is just as likely to be encouraged to further provocations. It is not just that Chinese leaders will be determined not to appear cowed by American power and resolve. They will sense an opportunity because, whatever Mr Biden says, they are unlikely to believe that America will really embark on a potentially catastrophic war over such a trivial issue. They will instead expect America to back down from an escalating crisis. That will be a big win for China, because the more stridently Washington has promised that it will fight, the more disastrously its standing in Asia will be damaged if it does not – and the more Beijing's position will be enhanced. That provides China with a big temptation to keep raising the pressure on the Philippines. But what if China gets it wrong and America does fight? It is all too easy to imagine where this could end if, by accident or design, a Filipino sailor is killed in a confrontation with Chinese forces, as envisaged by President Marcos' blunt questioner on May 31. Then miscalculations on both sides will so easily drive the world's two strongest states into an armed clash that neither side wants or intends, and which neither can prevent spiralling into a full-scale nuclear war. If that happens, both Washington and Beijing would be equally to blame, and both bear equal responsibility to reduce the risks by stepping back from the mounting dangers of their rivalry in order to conceive and create a new relationship that gives overriding priority to the preservation of peace between them.

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Philippine Coast Guard ship Melchora Aquino (left) and US Coast Guard cutter Midgett participating in a joint search and rescue exercise between the Philippine and US coast guards in the vicinity of the South China Sea, off Zanbales, on Sept 3, 2022. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr boldly declared his country's determination to defend its claims in the South China Sea against Chinese pressure at this year's Shangri-La Dialogue. PHOTO: AFP

Xi Jinping's surprising new source of economic advice

What China's leader may learn from a pair of reform-minded academics.

Zhou Qiren is an unusual economist. A professor at Peking University, he spent 10 years toiling in the countryside during China's Cultural Revolution. "The same farmer", he observed, "worked like two totally different persons on his private plots versus on collective land." Unlike most economists, Professor Zhou still studies incentives and constraints from the ground up, starting not with abstract principles but with concrete cases, often drawn from his travels around China and beyond. After a visit to a rice-noodle bar in Qinzhen, he wondered why it offered one-week courses showing others how to replicate its prized dish. On trips to China's sprawling

new city districts, he notes that it takes 70 steps to cross the road, compared with 15 or so for many streets in Manhattan. He is sceptical of state-owned enterprises, which he once compared to public passages crowded with private "sundries". He also has doubts about the feasibility of national self-reliance. Prosperity, he has pointed out, is built on "coming and going" across borders. It was, therefore, a surprise when Prof Zhou was invited to brief Mr Xi Jinping, China's ruler, at a symposium on May 23 in Shandong, a coastal province. The symposium was supposed to gather ideas for a big meeting on economic reform in July, the third plenary session of the Communist Party's central committee, held twice a decade. Although expectations for 2024's "third plenum" are low, previous meetings have shaken the world. Investors are eager for any hints about the problems Mr Xi intends

to tackle this year. To many foreign economists, these problems seem clear. China's leaders have damaged the confidence of households and entrepreneurs through capricious and intrusive policymaking, from the draconian zero-Covid regime to the regulatory crackdown on data transfers across borders. They have prioritised investment in technological self-reliance over decisive measures to boost consumption, stabilise the property market and dispel deflation. Foreign investors sometimes worry that China's leaders are trapped in an echo chamber. Seen in that light, the symposium in Shandong was a crumb of comfort. It suggested that Mr Xi is at least willing to listen to home-grown economists who have a grasp of what is going wrong. As well as the peripatetic Prof Zhou, the symposium included Mr Zhang Bin, a dovish economist at the Chinese Academy of Social

Sciences. He has studied America's escape from the Depression and Japan's lost decades after its housing bubble burst. He has looked into what would happen if China cut its interest rates to zero. In a review of the economy in the first quarter of 2024, he and his co-authors concluded that the central bank should reduce rates and set a target for credit growth to stop inflation expectations falling dangerously low. The review's authors also cautioned that attempts by local governments to cut debts could weaken demand at a bad time. Their report compared China's indebted property developers to financial institutions facing a run. Since they pose a systemic danger, they require a systematic response, rather than a piecemeal local one. It is not known whether Mr Zhang shared these views with Mr Xi directly in Shandong. But these positions did not, at least, disqualify him from being invited. After the symposium, Mr Xi

dropped some encouraging hints that he is getting the message. He emphasised the need for easing some of the social burdens that weigh on households, such as medical expenses and childcare. A few days later, he called for more jobs that would make use of the talents of unemployed college graduates. That was a more sensible message than a year ago, when he spoke about his own character-building hardships during the Cultural Revolution and encouraged the jobless young to show similar stoicism. In Shandong, according to official reports, Mr Zhang pointed out that China's productivity push would have to avoid the problem of regions copying and undercutting each other. He used the word "involution": when the effort someone exerts brings little benefit but merely raises the effort required of everyone else. Almost three years ago, Prof Zhou raised a similar concern about efforts to nurture local

champions. He drew an analogy with attempts to reverse desertification in China's western region. Planting lots of trees failed. What was required was a mix of grasses and shrubs that could enrich the soil and co-exist with trees. By a similar logic, local governments need to nurture diverse entrepreneurial ecosystems, out of which trees will spontaneously grow. The aim, as he put it, is ecological resilience. In Africa, Prof Zhou was impressed by the hardy, spiky grass of the savannah. It reaches only a few centimetres in height during the dry season. But when the weather turns, the grass can draw on deep roots to grow two metres tall. China's private firms must also endure a harsh climate. But the roots of entrepreneurialism run deep. If Mr Xi listens to economists like Prof Zhou and Mr Zhang, the season could turn in July. © 2024 THE ECONOMIST NEWSPAPER LIMITED. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Don't bank on flexi-work guidelines for better work-life balance

Resolving Singapore's culture of overwork will take more than this first salvo.

Boh Wai Fong and Thara Ravindran

The writing on the wall is clear. Singaporeans have long been a largely overworked, stressed and unhappy lot. National surveys have reported that seven out of 10 Singaporeans feel overworked. Four out of 10 are ready to call it quits or to find alternatives that offer better work-life balance. Worse, we are only the second most overworked city after Japan and have the lowest employee engagement levels according to a recent Gallup poll. So, when the Government finally announced guidelines for flexible work arrangements (FWA) will come into effect from December, there was a palpable sense of redemption from those aggrieved segments of the workforce about how they may finally be liberated. Decades of being always ready to respond to clients and customer needs 24/7 has led to a poor work-life balance and lower job security. Employees welcomed this strategic response to their clamour and a potential end to their work-related woes. Reactions to the direction set by the Government in formalising a set of guidelines on FWA were upbeat, given this positive emphasis on worker well-being and engagement. The signal is clear: Singapore needs an engaged workforce that enjoys a work-life balance on a par with the most productive and advanced economies of the world. The move is also in line with its long-term plans to improve the environment, economy, and the health of the larger community.

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

Not so fast. Let's not forget one more party is involved in this equation: employers. Against the backdrop of a decades-long digital disruption and rapid restructuring since Covid-19 hit, many organisations have come under constant pressure to run an efficient and profitable operation, manage a global network of customers and stakeholders, while keeping their costs low. Having to embrace FWA will mean that many of our firms that are already struggling to cope with existing challenges will be further saddled with the burden of a business process transformation. This may be a sizeable group when only 68 per cent of firms offer at least one FWA in 2023, down from the pandemic high of 90 per cent in 2020.

In Singapore, almost half of our gross domestic product comes from the nearly 300,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which also employ nearly three-quarters of our workforce. This segment is already in a contractionary mode for the fifth straight quarter, and is grappling with rising wage costs and a lack of resources and skills according to an OCBC SME Index released in April. Then there are businesses that are by nature labour-intensive and expected to be open round the clock such as food and beverages, healthcare, construction and logistics. FWA would pose unique challenges to such businesses with roles that do not support flexi-work. Such businesses can ill-afford approving many of the submitted FWA requests due to their special characteristics and needs, and may be unfairly penalised or cast as regressive workplaces. They, in turn, would have difficulty recruiting suitable candidates to meet their basic operational needs, further compounding their manpower woes. From an employee perspective, it may not be all that rosy either. For a start, flexible work is a double-edged sword. Doing away with synchronous work means the talent pool can be expanded beyond our boundaries to countries with a cheaper source of labour with the help of digital

tools easily and at no additional cost. Workers must also change their mindsets to make the best use of FWA since flexi-work does not automatically translate into work-life balance. Traditional attitudes towards working long hours just to create an impression of "being at work" and overcoming deeply ingrained work habits may be issues that need to be addressed to realistically achieve better employee well-being.

BUSINESS NEEDS ARE DECIDING FACTORS, NOT SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS

There is no doubt that a more people-centric, inclusive, flexible workplace based on mutual trust and engaged, contented workers is the obvious expected outcome of FWA. On the surface, this may be true, and it appears as though this can be realised through communication between the parties involved and ensuring a supportive infrastructure. But are these enough? Are there deeper issues that need to be addressed? The adoption of FWA has offered significant benefits during the challenging pandemic years, but they are not universally suitable. For instance, Apple faced substantial pushback from employees when it mandated a return to the office for part of the week, with staff expressing concerns over work-life balance and productivity. Similarly, Goldman Sachs' return-to-office policy emphasised the need for in-person collaboration to sustain its high-performance culture, despite resistance from employees who had adapted to remote work. These examples underscore the complexities companies face in balancing flexibility with operational needs. Even then, the euphoria surrounding the FWA guidelines has succeeded in creating a perception that businesses must accede to all requests if they are

to project a progressive employer image. Nothing is farther from the truth and employees need to remember that business needs are the deciding factor, not a secondary consideration. All things considered, the reality that the guidelines do not mandate FWA must be drilled in so that employee expectations can be set. While the guidelines direct firms to formally assess requests for flexible arrangements and acknowledge business needs as important, there is bound to be pressure on employers and supervisors to implement these irrespective of whether they are ready or not.

THE ROAD AHEAD – A WORD OF CAUTION

FWA singularly would most certainly not guarantee engagement and productivity improvements. It could actually take a turn for the worse if an organisation already has an issue with poor worker attitudes and disengagement. Rushing into FWA before fixing these structural problems will only aggravate the situation. Businesses here already face longstanding challenges – such as employee attitude, skills and productivity – especially in the construction and IT and professional services domains. It is difficult to envisage that a quick implementation of FWA would do anything to ease these concerns even if such arrangements can be realistically implemented in some sectors. There are also jobs whose fundamental design defies flexi-work such as those in construction and healthcare that require a physical presence or contact with clients over long hours. There is little scope for flexibility in such roles. Will this lead to us creating a second tier of jobs nobody wants? The retail sector, for example, has struggled with remote work due to the necessity of on-site presence for customer service and inventory management. Meanwhile, the healthcare sector,

requiring direct patient interaction, found remote work impractical for roles like nurses and doctors. Flexi-work can also fuel work-life conflict. Surveys by the Institute of Policy Studies in Singapore revealed that while many employees appreciated the flexibility of remote work, a significant number faced increased stress and difficulties in separating work from personal life. Similarly, a study by Microsoft's Work Trend Index highlighted global challenges, noting that remote workers often experience burnout and isolation. These findings highlight the importance of a balanced approach to FWA, considering both the benefits and inherent limitations based on industry and job role specifics. All these do not mean FWA is a hopeless endeavour but that there is so much more to be done before FWA can be widely implemented. Businesses would need to look at re-engineering their processes. Redesigning jobs to allow for sufficient overlaps between roles and responsibilities and support redundancies is an alternative for businesses that face structural constraints in implementing work flexibility. Pooled resources, including technological tools and manpower, may help smaller enterprises to meet expectations where they find themselves short on workers with the necessary skills. Intervention from business federations and consortia to enable such sharing, training and development and effective mediation will be crucial. But in this, both employers and employees would need to tread with caution and be realistic in their expectations of what FWA can do for them.

• Professor Boh Wai Fong is vice-president (Lifelong Learning & Alumni Engagement) and president's chair in Information Systems at Nanyang Technological University's Nanyang Business School. Dr Thara Ravindran is research fellow at the same school.

The many-sided crisis in consulting

Disruption is coming to bite the industry that made a cult of it.

Rana Foroohar

I once worked for a large magazine company in the US that was worried about falling revenues and loss of readership amid what was then called the dot.com revolution. Corporate leaders decided to hire a major management consulting firm to analyse what should be done. After months of meetings and millions in fees, the verdict came in. Apparently, we just needed better story ideas. Needless to say, this sage advice saved neither readers nor the product. For this and other reasons, I have always been sceptical of management consulting. For starters, the "if you can measure it, you can manage it" approach to business just misses so much. Certain things, such as input costs and share price, can be discretely tallied. Others – like culture, loyalty and creativity – cannot. Then there is the buck-passing problem: Companies very often hire consultants so they can blame someone else if the solutions to challenging problems go awry. Add to this the fact that artificial intelligence (AI) can increasingly do the lower end of consulting work, and you have got a profession that may very well be in for secular decline. The signs are everywhere. Firms such as Bain and McKinsey are shedding workers and offering them financial incentives to leave. Deloitte and EY are cutting costs and reorganising. Throughout the industry, there is a new sense of penny-pinching where things had once been flush. While the profession boomed during Covid-19, when companies desperately sought help to deal with everything from supply-chain troubles to work-from-home shifts and the uncertain nature of the economic cycle, it is now slowing. According to the Kennedy Consulting Industry Monitor, revenue growth halved to 5 per cent in 2023. Consulting firms are coming under political pressure, too. A couple of weeks ago, a Bill to ban McKinsey from US government work, put forward by Missouri Senator Josh Hawley, passed the Senate Homeland Security Committee. There are still multiple hurdles to it becoming law, but the idea is to stop the defence department and other federal agencies contracting with firms that do business with the Chinese government. But it's not only populist politicians who are sceptical of consultants. Academics and industry insiders alike have become more critical in recent years. Economist Mariana Mazzucato and her colleague Rosie Collington in 2023 published *The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens Our Businesses, Infantilizes Our Governments And Warps Our Economies*. The book argues that consulting has thrived on the problems of modern capitalism, from financialisation and corporate short-termism to risk aversion in a starved public sector, earning undue economic rents while creating very little value. "While consulting is an old profession," they write, "the Big Con grew from the 1980s and 1990s in the wake of reforms by both the 'neoliberal' right and 'Third Way' progressives – on both sides of the political spectrum." Indeed, the industry's problems go even further back. One could argue that modern management consulting is the unfortunate love child of early 20th-century Taylorism – in which Frederick Winslow Taylor, a mechanical engineer from Philadelphia, aimed to clock the productivity of workers down to the second – and Chicago School ideas about "efficient" markets, which gained steam from the 1960s onwards. Consultants have created a huge global market by preaching the gospel of disruption. As Harvard professor Clayton Christensen argued in *The Innovator's Dilemma*, in 1997, big companies were always at risk of having their lunch eaten by smaller upstarts. In order to get ahead of that, they needed to be changing all the time, internally. But while that may have seemed true during the dot.com boom of the late 1990s, most sectors have become more concentrated, with big firms taking an ever larger slice of the economic pie. Still, the cult of disruption dies hard. As reformed consultant and Deloitte/Cisco veteran Ashley Goodall writes in his new book *The Problem With Change*, "while we were all busily disrupting ourselves hither and yon, we somehow lost sight of the fact that change and improvement are two different things". In the beginning, he says, executives thought "we need to fix this problem; therefore, we need to change". Now, he says, too many believe that "we need to change, because then all the problems will be fixed". Consulting itself will have to change, because technology can today do so much at the lower end of the pay scale. AI can put together a good enough PowerPoint presentation or research document, knocking out a lot of what freshman consultants used to do. Meanwhile, there is more competition at the top, with all sorts of boutique risk analysis firms and sector experts vying for a slice of the advisory business. It's possible that a recession will give the industry new life. Management consulting often makes money by telling companies to cut staff. It can also replace them temporarily with either technology or more consultants, without all those bothersome issues of full-time employment or benefits. But I suspect that, just as many superfluous jobs at the bottom end of the socio-economic food chain have gone away in recent decades, white-collar industries such as consulting will be disrupted, too. Will the result be fewer slide decks, mission statements, mandatory work bonding sessions and corporate-speak? If so, I'm all in. FINANCIAL TIMES

FORUM

Letter of the day

We can modify our me-first mindset by not rushing for every freebie

I refer to Mr Ang Ah Lay's letter "Suggestions to reverse me-first attitude not practical" (May 31) in response to senior columnist Chua Mui Hoong's Opinion piece "PM Wong's challenge: Reversing the me-first instincts of Singaporeans" (May 17).

I do not think Ms Chua's suggestions are ineffectual or

impractical. In fact, she wrote an excellent piece and made many suggestions that can be considered, although highlighting that it would take a lot to effect a habit change and inculcate a posture of looking out for others. But this should not be a deterrent. As Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". Each of us can take

that step to make the small personal decisions to create a better future for Singapore.

On a micro level, we could start modifying our "me-first" mindset and behaviour by focusing more on letting others have privileges instead of ourselves. For instance, we could stop jostling for free or subsidised services such as PayLah rebates to allow the less well-off a better chance of

accessing them. Instead of gaming the system (be it in housing, healthcare, insurance or other matters) to maximise our own benefits, we could spare some thought for those for whom the schemes were originally designed to help.

Ms Chua accurately pointed out that the "every man for himself" mindset was quintessential of post-war Singapore, which was still very much a third-world country. But as our nation matures, we can afford to move to the next level where success is not measured merely in material terms.

As Ms Chua said in one of her articles, "we can afford to leave behind some habits bred in times of scarcity to embrace a culture of sufficiency" (Higher wages for tradespeople: Who pays the bill?, April 21, 2023). After all, life is not a zero-sum game and very often, shared joy is a double joy.

Karen Yip Lai Kham

National identity • Where am I 'really' from? Singapore

Straits Times journalist Danson Cheong makes important points in his commentary "Sorry, but we're Chinese Singaporeans – not your compatriots" (June 2).

A key pillar of being Singaporean is that our allegiance is to Singapore and not to where our ancestors happened to come from.

As a Singaporean of Chinese ethnicity (Peranakan on my father's side), I relate more closely to Singaporeans of Malay, Indian or Eurasian ethnicity than to someone from China.

It is very dangerous for others to demand Singaporeans' affinity or loyalty based on race. If this is allowed to take root, it would undermine Singapore's social fabric, painstakingly woven together since independence.

Singapore is a sovereign and independent state. We are a socially and economically successful, multiracial country. Singapore is not a Chinese state. Where am I "really" from? Singapore.

Allen Tan Han Loong

A key pillar of being Singaporean is that our allegiance is to Singapore and not to where our ancestors happened to come from.

Electric vehicles • Ways to encourage ownership

I refer to the letter "Not worth buying EV after all" by Forum writer Perinpanayagam James (May 31).

To implement a new way of doing things right, sometimes significant incentives must be given initially for people to change their preferences.

This is part of human nature. I noticed that the authorities are trying to push more people to

go for electric vehicles (EVs) by building more EV chargers in public carparks.

This cannot be avoided if we want to go for an EV society. There are other things the authorities can do.

First, it is useful to find ways to get Singaporeans not to want to own a vehicle in the first place.

Second, a system should be set up for drivers here to exchange

EV batteries instead of charging their EVs in public carparks.

I understand that in China, EV batteries can be exchanged in three minutes. This is a great incentive to own an EV and make building chargers in public carparks obsolete.

After everyone has converted to EVs, the authorities can then consider taxing EVs to persuade Singaporeans to use our efficient public transportation and rent an EV only when needed.

The total conversion to EVs can also release a lot of precious land space currently occupied by petrol kiosks.

Lim Poh Seng



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at the Shangri-La Dialogue on June 2. The writer says the summit is an excellent concept to get nations to talk about defence security. ST PHOTO: SHINTARO TAY

Talking eases tension and prevents potential conflicts. Perhaps one can draw an analogy with the adage that barking dogs don't bite.

The fact that the superpowers US and China attended this 2024 summit adds credibility. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's attendance also added value and shows the significance of these meetings.

The dialogue is testament to the foresight of past and present leaders in Singapore to play a part in maintaining global peace.

A peaceful world enhances Singapore's survival, stability and livelihood which, ultimately, is good for its people too.

Such planning and strategy require vision and the ability to "join the dots" correctly, and take steps to prevent any problems from cropping up.

It's said that when the talking stops, the fighting starts. We hope that doesn't happen.

Victor Choong Yu Fook

Shangri-La Dialogue • Summit highlights Singapore's role in maintaining global peace

The Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, initiated in 2002 as an unofficial defence summit, is an excellent concept to get nations to talk about defence security.

Emergencies • Singapore takes responses seriously

Bangkok's Samitivej Srinakarin Hospital did an excellent job indeed in responding to the Singapore Airlines severe turbulence incident and taking care of mass casualties (Thai hospital's emergency response to be lauded, May 30).

Singapore is also well known for having its essential services prepared for disasters.

In fact, on many occasions and on short notice, we have sent our army, medical teams and Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) personnel to help other countries in disaster relief projects.

Singapore is aware that preparedness in hospitals is critical in managing crises. It involves efficient strategies,

trained staff and managing resources.

Singapore has conducted many drills to simulate disaster situations at places such as MRT stations, where the police, SCDF and medical teams, among others, are involved. It shows that we take disaster preparedness seriously.

Harry Ong Heng Poh



Singapore Civil Defence Force personnel putting out a liquefied petroleum gas tank fire and rescuing a casualty during a demonstration at the Home Team Tactical Centre in 2023. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Replies

Agriculture • Singapore Food Agency committed to helping local farms flourish

We thank Forum writers Loh Kin Poh and Leo K.W. Lum for their views (Crucial to ensure success of food industry players, and Vegetable farmer has to be CEO, COO and CFO, both May 29).

The Singapore Food Agency (SFA) is committed to supporting our nascent local agri-food sector so that our local produce can help tide us over unexpected food supply contingencies and disruptions.

However, in view of Singapore's inherent land and resource constraints, our local farms have to leverage technology and advanced farming systems to increase their productivity and ensure that local production is climate-resilient and resource-efficient.

SFA has been supporting local farms through various funding

schemes, such as the \$60 million Agri-food Cluster Transformation Fund, to help our farms build up their capabilities and capacity to produce more with less.

Apart from enhancing the production capabilities and capacity of our farms, we work closely with the Singapore Agro-Food Enterprises Federation and commercial partners to increase awareness and uptake of local produce.

The federation helps local farms to aggregate their produce for sale in various retail outlets, as well as foster collaborations among its members and other stakeholders such as hotels, restaurants, caterers and food manufacturers to support locally farmed produce.

Consumers, too, play a crucial

role in helping our agri-industry succeed. We encourage consumers to support our local farmers by buying their produce which can be identified through red SG Fresh Produce logos displayed on the packaging.

As with other industries, the nascency of the agri-food sector means that businesses that are doing well will look to expand their operations, and there will be new entrants even as others exit the sector for various reasons.

SFA remains steadfast and committed to help our farms grow to provide stronger food security for generations of Singaporeans to come.

Cheong Lai Peng
Senior Director (Industry Development and Community Partnership)
Singapore Food Agency

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Letters should be for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. Letters to be considered for the following day's publication must reach Forum by 1pm and must include the writer's full name, address and phone number. The Forum Editor reserves the right to edit the letters. E-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg

*With Deepest Sympathy &
Heartfelt Condolence to Our*



Secretary General
LIM CHEE SENG
Departed on 2 June 2024

From:



洛陽大伯公宮
Loyang Tua Pek Kong

Honorary Advisor : **Teo Chee Hean**

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Coordinating Minister for National Security &
Member of Parliament for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC

Desmond Tan Kok Ming

Senior Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office of Singapore
Member of Parliament for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC

Mohamed Sharael Taha

Member of Parliament for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC

Dr. Ahmad Mohd. Magad Former-Member of Parliament

Chan Soo Seng Former-Member of Parliament

Tan Thiam Lye, BBM (L)

Lian Kang Leng

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"The Lord is My Light and My Salvation; Whom Shall I Fear The Lord is My Life's Refuge; Of Whom Should I Be Afraid?"

Psalms 27



AMY HSUI MEI LIAW TAN 1936 ~ 2024

was called home to be with the Lord on 2 June 2024.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Thomas Tan To Hao (deceased)

Brothers:

Liaw Chang Teng
Liaw Chang Ze
Liaw Chang Fu
Liaw Chang Zong

Sisters:

Liaw Min (deceased)
Liaw Ji (deceased)
Liaw Su Hui

Sons:

Tecson Liaw Tan
Hocson Liaw Tan

Daughters:

Victoria Liaw Tan
Josefina Liaw Tan

Grandson:

Alexander T. Chua JR.

Granddaughters:

Jaclyn Tan Chua
Julia Lansangan Tan
Alexis Tan Chua
Christina Tan Nolasco

Great-grandson:

Aaden Tan Nolasco

Godfather:

Raymundo A. Yu Jr.

Brother-in-law:

Wang Zong Xiong

Daughter-in-law:

Celia Lansangan Tan

Son-in-law:

Alexander L. Chua (deceased)

Grandsons-in-law:

Blair Schuyler Go
Arrold Nolasco

Godmother:

Nancy L. Go

Caregivers:

Gina Brendisi Tubo, Angeline Godilo, Glenda Dejucos,
Razak Bin Dollah, Rahimi Bin Salleh

And all relatives & friends.

Wake Venue:

42 Mount Echo Park, Singapore 248794

No wreaths / flowers please.

Wake Visitation Timing:

4th to 7th June 2024 (Tuesday to Friday) from 11.00am to 10.00pm

**Funeral Mass will be held on 8th June 2024 (Saturday) at 9.30am at Church of St. Teresa
Singapore, 510 Kampong Bahru Road, Singapore 099446.**

**Thereafter to St Joseph's Church (Bukit Timah) Columbarium,
620 Upper Bukit Timah Road, Singapore 678116, for interment at 11.00am.**

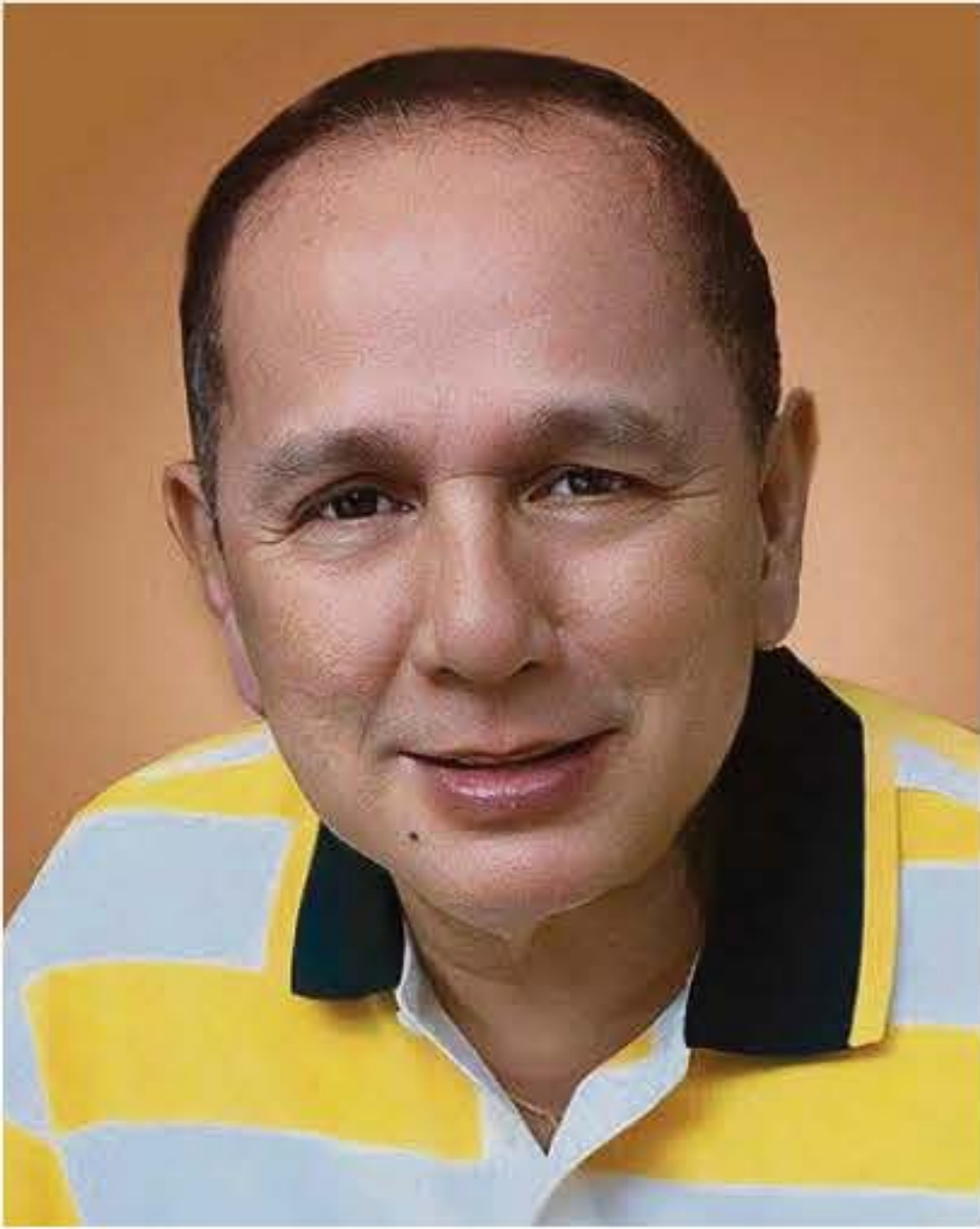


OBITUARIES

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*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith".*

2 Timothy 4:7



THEODORE STEPHEN DANKER

Age 77

Passed away peacefully on 2nd June 2024,
leaving behind loved ones.

Wife : Judy Foo Eng Wah (deceased)

Daughters

Sharon
Jean

Brothers

Benedict (deceased)
Patrick

Sisters

Maureen
Diana

Granddaughter

Caitlyn

Caregiver

Ming

Sons-in-law

Bobby Heerasing
Glenn Ong

Sisters-in-law


Anna Lim
Chan Kim Lan

Brother-in-law


James Irvine

Wake is held at St Joseph's Church at 143 Victoria Street Singapore 188020.

Cortège leaves on Friday 7th June at 12pm for funeral mass at
St Joseph's Church, thereafter to Mandai Crematorium
Service Hall 2 for cremation at 2:20pm.



With Deepest Sympathy and
Heartfelt Condolences to our Chairman
Mr Lim Choo Leng and family
On the demise of his Beloved Mother-in-law





Mdm Seet Tong Buay


Departed on 2 June 2024

From:
Board of Directors,
Management and Staff of

HSL Constructor Pte Ltd



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Sir Winston Churchill

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OBITUARIES


Muthu Rasandran (Raja)
(Former ST Aerospace)
Age: 71
Passed away peacefully on
2 June 2024, dearly missed
and remembered by loved ones.
Children:
Logeshwaran Ranjeet Rasandran
Shamini Rasandran
Satheswary Rasandran
Nanthini Rasandran
Fur-Son: Baileys R
Caregiver: Pa Aung
**Children-in-law, Grandchildren,
Relatives and Friends.**
Appa will be resting at Block 920
Hougang Street 91 (Void Deck),
Singapore 530920.
He will embark on his final journey
on Tuesday 4 June 2024 at
5.00pm for cremation at Mandai
Crematorium Hall 2 at 6.30pm.
Contact: 82875956 / 90067285

In Loving Memory Of




PETER PHANG
Departed 4 June 1977

*In life loved and honoured
In death remembered
Always remembered by
Wife & Children*



In memory of
a loved one

A portrait of Dr. R. S. Kulkarni, a middle-aged man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a purple shirt. He is smiling slightly and has a bindi on his forehead. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 4, Crystal Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.
Cortege leaves on Tuesday 4 June 2024 at 3.00pm for
cremation at Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 at 4.15pm.

Cortege leaves on Thursday 6 June 2024 at 9:20 am
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 10:20am.

"As is the earthy one, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly one, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly."
1 Corinthians 15:48-49

Love you always, Pa, Mum, Meimei, Porpor
and loved ones.

34th Anniversary

B. PANJALAI
Departed on 4th June 1990

Left suddenly on 4/6/90
- Love's Greatest Gift.
Deeply missed but never
forgotten by loving
husband P. Ramadas
& children.

A portrait photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a bindi on her forehead and a dark sari with a gold border. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

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Cortège will leave on Thursday 6 June 2024 at 11.45am for funeral mass at church of the Holy Family 6 Chapel Rd S(429508) and thereafter for Mandai crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 2:20pm.

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**Bernardo
Pinheiro
bringing Lover
Boy home with a
well-timed finish
in the Open
Maiden (1,100m)
on June 1.
ST PHOTO:
SYAMIL SAPARI**



SPORT

US Women's Open 2024

SASO SEALS UNIQUE DOUBLE

First Filipina to win US Women's Open becomes the first from Japan to do so

WASHINGTON – Yuka Saso has brought golfing glory to two different nations.

In 2021, when she won her first Major title, it marked the first time a woman from the Philippines won the US Women's Open. Three years later, Saso has switched her sporting nationality to Japan – she has one parent from each country – and on June 2 became the first player flying the Japanese flag to win the championship.

She shot a two-under 68 in her final round to capture her second US Women's Open on June 2 at Lancaster Country Club in Pennsylvania.

"I think winning in 2021, I represented the Philippines (and) I feel like I was able to give back to my mum," she said at her trophy presentation. "This year, I was able to represent Japan, and I think I was able to give back to my dad. I'm very happy that I was able to do it."

Saso was one of just two players to finish the week under par. She started the day three off the pace but used four birdies in a five-hole stretch on the back nine to separate from the pack and total four-under 276 for a three-stroke win.

The 22-year-old experienced a three-year title drought of any kind, Major or not, since her first US Women's Open.

"I think it just makes it special because after a long wait, and I wasn't expecting to win the US Women's

Open, last time, too, I wasn't expecting it, and this time, too, I wasn't expecting it," Saso said. "I think that's why it made me a bit emotional."

"Winning just makes you look back in all the things that your family and your team and my sponsors, they supported me throughout good or bad."

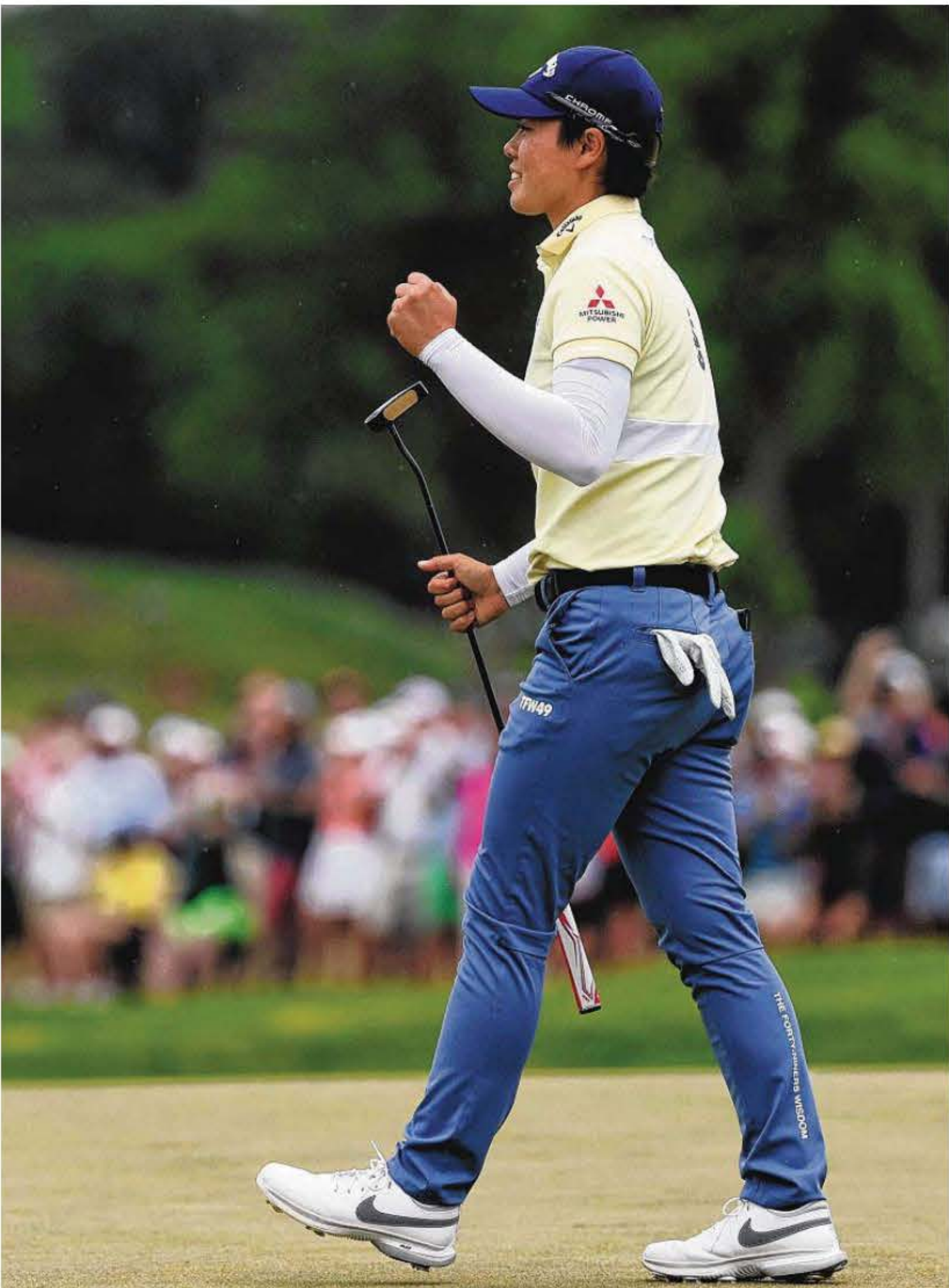
The three 54-hole co-leaders were Minjee Lee of Australia, American Andrea Lee and Wichanee Meechai of Thailand at five under. All three dropped down the leaderboard as they battled the difficult scoring conditions.

Saso swept in a 20-foot birdie putt at the par-four second hole before her biggest hiccup, a four-putt double bogey at the par-three sixth. She trailed Minjee Lee by two when she reached the par-three 12th and made the first of two consecutive birdies.

After another birdie at No. 15 gave her a two-shot cushion, Saso drove the green at the 232-yard par-four 16th and two-putted for birdie. She made bogey from 3½ feet at No. 17 before hitting a chip onto the 18th green that finished less than two feet away to set up a clinching par.

"I chipped from the front yesterday, too, and I left it more than 10 feet," Saso said, "and I just told myself, be aggressive and not to be short 10 feet, and I'm glad that I was able to do it."

Hinako Shibuno fired a 72 to



Japan's Yuka Saso celebrating on the 18th green in the final round of the US Women's Open in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on June 2. She parred the last hole to beat compatriot Hinako Shibuno by three shots. PHOTO: AFP

make it a one-two finish for Japan, ending the week one under.

Andrea Lee bogeyed her final two holes to card a 75, falling to a tie for third at even par.

"It was tough out there," said the 25-year-old, who made a double bogey, four bogeys and one birdie. "Obviously didn't have my best right from the start. I was pretty nervous, but yeah, just didn't have

great shots out there. I had a couple of drives that really cost me, especially the double on four."

Compatriot Ally Ewing joined Andrea Lee in third place as she tied the round of the day with a bogey-free 66. Thailand's Arpichaya Yubol posted a 69 to take fifth at one over.

Wichanee, who shot in the 60s for three straight days, posted a 77

to drop to two over and a tie for sixth with Ayaka Furue of Japan (68) and Atthaya Thitikul of Thailand (68).

The 2022 winner Minjee Lee (78), who was tied for ninth at three over, said: "I started good. Felt like I hit it pretty good, just missed a couple putts for birdie early and then I kind of blew up from there."

REUTERS, AFP

MacIntyre bags first tour title, earns US Open place

HAMILTON – Robert MacIntyre's first victory on the PGA Tour will be memorable for countless reasons.

His father was there every step of the way in the Canadian Open as a fill-in caddie.

"That's the guy that taught me the game of golf," MacIntyre said. "He was trying to tell me to stay focused, swing smooth."

They could celebrate together af-

ter the Scottish golfer shot two-under 68 on June 2 for a one-stroke tournament victory at Hamilton Golf & Country Club in Ontario.

MacIntyre, a left-hander who earned his PGA Tour card via the DP World Tour Race to Dubai rankings, finished at 16-under 264. That was one stroke better than Ben Griffin, who shot a bogey-free 65.

Dougie MacIntyre did his part as

the caddie.

"I'm speechless," the younger MacIntyre said. "That's everything for me and my family. To have him on the bag, I'm crying with joy, but I'm laughing because I didn't think it was possible."

Now, MacIntyre has a spot in the US Open in less than two weeks. He is full of gratitude.

"The whole support I've had from

Scotland, (for) me and my family," he said. "I honestly can't believe this."

When the 27-year-old made the turn, he held a four-stroke lead with six golfers sharing second place. But the tournament had been far from decided, not to mention MacIntyre's apparent irritation because of noise stemming from a drone.

Griffin, who was also vying for his first PGA win, had a late rally with three straight birdies, but was unable to sink a birdie putt from the fringe on the last hole.

"I fought hard," said the American. "It felt like there was a lid on the cup for most of the day for me. I hit so many pretty good putts."

Griffin, who was part of a group tied for second place entering the

round, had a strange day, with a birdie on the par-four third hole after his tee shot settled on the seventh fairway. He also made a birdie putt on the 16th green from nearly 40 feet.

"(MacIntyre) was kind of scrambling a lot down the stretch and I looked at it as an opportunity to kind of make a charge and it was a ton of fun and wouldn't trade it for anything," Griffin said. "Even though I finished second, tons of positives from this week and game feels good."

Third-place finisher Victor Perez of France shot a bogey-free 64 for a 266 total, capped by a birdie putt on the final hole. South Korea's Tom Kim and Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy made charges with 64s to share fourth place on 267. REUTERS

Duplantis wins at home but misses world record again

STOCKHOLM – Sweden's Armand Duplantis failed in another attempt to break his own pole vault world record but continued to impress ahead of the Paris Olympics at the Diamond League meet at Stockholm's Olympic Stadium on June 2.

The Olympic and world champion broke his record for the eighth time with a vault of 6.24 metres in April, and after easing to victory with his first attempt at 6.00m on June 2, he had the home crowd behind him as he attempted to go even better.

The 24-year-old came bitterly close, but was unable to clear 6.25m in his three attempts. Two-time world champion American Sam Kendricks was second with 5.90m.

Femke Bol made a winning return to action as she contested her first outdoor race of 2024, and the Dutch world champion had little

trouble winning the women's 400m hurdles in 53.07 seconds.

"It was really fun, Stockholm is really a wonderful place and especially if I can run during Mondo's world-record attempts, then the crowd is really amazing," Bol said.

Brazil's Alison dos Santos cruised to victory in the men's 400m hurdles, way ahead of world silver medallist Kyron McMaster (48.05sec) of the British Virgin Islands.

Dos Santos, who beat Norway's Olympic and world champion Karsten Warholm in Oslo on May 30 with a 46.63sec effort, could afford to run a slower time of 47.01sec as he eased to the line having exploded down the back straight.

"When I compare these last two races in Oslo and Stockholm, I would say that the biggest difference is the feeling you have at these stadiums," dos Santos said. "Here, I feel like I am home, every-



Sweden's Armand Duplantis competing in the pole vault at the Stockholm Diamond League on June 2. He won with a 6.00m effort but failed to clear a world-record 6.25m in three attempts. PHOTO: REUTERS

body is like screaming for me. In Norway, I know that they cheer for Warholm. So that is kind of a difference between these two."

British Olympic silver medallist Laura Muir strolled to a win in the women's 1,500m in 3min 57.99sec. She made her move on the final bend and pulled away down the home straight.

Kenya's Edinah Jebitok was second with a personal best of 3:58.88 ahead of Australian Georgia Griffith (3:59.17).

On June 3, World Athletics launched a new season-ending three-day global championship starting in 2026 in Budapest to fill the gap between the Olympics and world championships.

The World Athletics Ultimate Championship will take place every two years and aims to attract the biggest names in track and field from Sept 11-13, 2026.

Gold medallists are set to receive

US\$150,000 (\$203,000) each from a prize pool of US\$10 million, the largest prize pot in the sport's history.

Meanwhile, Commonwealth Games champion Jess Stenson, 36, was named in Australia's Paris marathon team on June 3 at the expense of four-time Olympian Lisa Weightman after an ugly selection row.

Weightman, 45, was bidding to become the first Australian track and field athlete to compete at five Olympics and qualified third-fastest behind Sinead Diver, 47, and Genevieve Gregson, 34, for the three-member women's team.

But with six runners all under the qualifying time, selectors opted for Stenson, the Birmingham 2022 champion who is on the comeback trail after giving birth.

Weightman, who was told about the decision in May, appealed to the National Sports Tribunal. The tribunal recommended Athletics Australia appoint an independent committee to reconsider their selection, but the governing body declined to do so. REUTERS, AFP

SportsWorld

Emery wins ASG long jump, misses mark

Victoria Junior College's Conrad Emery was just 1cm behind the national long jump record with his gold-winning effort of 7.61m at the Asean Schools Games (ASG) in Da Nang, Vietnam, on June 3.

The 18-year-old Singaporean, who beat Vietnam's Pham Xuan Tien (7.24m) and Malaysia's Adam Haqimi Azrail (6.98m) to the title, has been inching closer to the 7.62m mark set by Matthew Goh at the 2009 SEA Games.

At the National School Games in April, he registered 7.36m to break the A Division boys' record. Over 100 student athletes from 24 schools are representing Singapore at the ASG from May 31 to June 9 in four sports – athletics, badminton, basketball and swimming.

Tributes for Burrow, who dies at 41

LONDON – Former England and Leeds Rhinos rugby league player Rob Burrow, who was diagnosed with motor neurone disease in 2019, has died aged 41, the Super League club said on June 2.

Britain's Prince William and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak were among those who paid tribute to Burrow, who played for Leeds between 2001 and 2017 and won eight Super League titles. REUTERS

Scalvini out of Euro with knee injury

ROME – Atalanta defender Giorgio Scalvini is out of Italy's European Championship title defence with a knee ligament tear, its football federation confirmed on June 2.

The 20-year-old will sit out the tournament after being injured during Atalanta's loss to Fiorentina on June 2, the final match of the Serie A season. AFP

Venezia back in Serie A after play-off win

ROME – Venezia were promoted to Serie A on June 2 following a 1-0 home win over Cremonese in the second leg of their play-off final. After the 0-0 first game on May 30, Christian Gytkjaer's strike earned Venezia victory.

In Spain, Leganes returned to La Liga for the first time since 2020 after beating Elche 2-0 on June 2 to win Spain's second division. REUTERS, AFP



Australia's Alex de Minaur hitting a backhand against world No. 5 Daniil Medvedev of Russia on Court Suzanne-Lenglen on June 3. The 11th seed recorded his maiden win against a top-five opponent at a Grand Slam tournament to reach the French Open quarter-finals for the first time. This matches his deepest run at a Major, having made the last eight of the 2020 US Open. PHOTO: REUTERS

French Open 2024

DEMON TERRORISES MEDVEDEV IN UPSET

De Minaur makes breakthrough to ensure world No. 5 is highest singles seed to fall

PARIS – Alex de Minaur broke a 20-year Australian hoodoo at the French Open on June 3, as the 11th seed battled from a set down to stun fifth seed Daniil Medvedev 4-6, 6-2, 6-1, 6-3 and advance to his first Roland Garros quarter-final.

De Minaur became the first man from his nation to reach the last eight at the clay-court Grand Slam since Lleyton Hewitt in 2004, with the victory on Court Suzanne-Lenglen seemingly aided by Medvedev's mid-match blip due to a foot problem.

The 25-year-old nicknamed "Demon" said: "I didn't expect to be in the quarter-finals here, I didn't play very well on the clay the past few years.

"Against Daniil it's always very tactical, we both defend well, but

I'm so happy to have won today." Medvedev, who reached the quarter-finals in 2021, had lost only twice in eight previous meetings with de Minaur. And the Russian drew first blood with a break in the third game but was pushed hard in the next before extending his lead.

De Minaur drew loud cheers from the crowd as he retrieved shots relentlessly to mount a late comeback attempt from there but Medvedev wrapped up the opening set with little fuss to briefly dampen his opponent's spirits.

Medvedev shrugged off a string of superb winners from de Minaur at the start of the second set but surrendered it tamely with an unforced error after taking a medical timeout for blisters on his foot.

With the momentum shifting, de

Minaur blazed to a 5-1 lead en route to winning the third set, before he traded breaks with Medvedev early in the fourth and pulled away shortly after for a famous win.

This matches de Minaur's deepest run at a Major, having made the US Open quarter-finals in 2020.

World No. 5 Medvedev is the highest singles seed to fall at this year's tournament.

In the women's draw, world No. 4 Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan sent out a warning to her fellow title contenders as she eased to a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Elina Svitolina on June 3 to reach her second French Open quarter-final.

After a sluggish start with both players dropping serve, Russian-born Rybakina raised her level and cruised through the first set.

In the second set, Svitolina was no match again for Rybakina as the 19th-ranked Ukrainian showed signs of fatigue from the start and lacked precision under the long-awaited sun after a wet first week on the Paris red clay.

Rybakina said she would need to be more consistent when she plays 15th-ranked Italian Jasmine Paolini, who reached the last eight of a Grand Slam for the first time.

"It's all about focus now, the matches are getting tougher, the opening also, so I think it's a lot about the consistency, not having so many ups and downs," she said.

Svitolina was unable to trouble the 2022 Wimbledon champion.

"I missed my chance, but she's a great player. It's always tricky because you feel like you're so close, but at the same time so far," the 29-year-old said.

Rybakina withdrew from the French Open in 2023 before her third-round match because of illness.

This season, after winning titles in Brisbane, Abu Dhabi and Stuttgart, Rybakina pulled out of the Italian Open due to health issues.

Rybakina is the only player to beat Iga Swiatek on clay this year, defeating the world No. 1 and three-time French Open champion on her way to the Stuttgart title in April.

Later, Aryna Sabalenka powered into a seventh consecutive Grand Slam quarter-final with an impressive 6-2, 6-3 victory over American 22nd seed Emma Navarro in 69 minutes.

Two-time Australian Open champion Sabalenka belted 36 winners past an overmatched Navarro to avenge her defeat by the 23-year-old at Indian Wells in March.

The second seed, a semi-finalist in Paris in 2023, will take on Mirra Andreieva for a place in the last four. The 17-year-old Russian ousted France's Varvara Gracheva.

"It sounds crazy to me, to be honest, and I'm super happy that I was able to bring this consistency on the Grand Slams," said Sabalenka.

"That's really amazing. I just, yeah, it's motivating me a lot to keep pushing myself a lot and to see where is the limit."

Her victory over Navarro means the top five women's seeds are through to the last eight at Roland Garros for only the third time in three decades. The other two occasions were in 1996 and 2013.

REUTERS, AFP

FRENCH OPEN
Day 10: Singtel TV Ch127 & StarHub Ch211, 4.50pm

Dimitrov in q-finals on 14th attempt

PARIS – Poland's Hubert Hurkacz made an unusual request to his opponent Grigor Dimitrov to change the chair umpire during a straight-set loss in the last 16 of the French Open on June 2.

Hurkacz approached Dimitrov at a changeover in the third set with the Bulgarian about to serve at 5-6, asking him if he wanted to replace Alison Hughes.

Seemingly unhappy over a line call, eighth seed Hurkacz had called multiple times for the supervisor before suggesting to Dimitrov they get a new umpire.

No change was made and Dimitrov held serve before winning the tiebreak to advance 7-6 (7-5), 6-4, 7-6 (7-3), reaching his first Roland Garros quarter-final at the 14th attempt.

Hurkacz downplayed the incident after the match, insisting it was "all good".

"It's clay court, so it's sometimes difficult when the balls are really close... just it's really close from time to time," the world No. 8 said. "Definitely some of the calls you wish they are different way, but it's just the way it is, and you gotta accept the things."

Dimitrov defended Hurkacz and maintained the exchange was not a big deal.

"I think the thing is we all can say very difficult things in the heat of a moment. I'm sure whatever he said, it was not meant in a bad way," said the 33-year-old.

"Also, the umpires, they're trying their best. It's a tricky business out there when the ball gets so close to the line."

Next up for Dimitrov is second seed Jannik Sinner on June 4. The Italian shook off a sluggish start and blazed into the quarter-finals on June 2 with a 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-1 victory over local hope Corentin Moutet.

Australian Open champion Sinner was in a spot of bother in front of partisan fans on Court Philippe-Chatrier as the off-colour 22-year-old went 5-0 down in 23 minutes, but he managed to get on the board.

"It was very tough for me. I think he played very well in the first set," said Sinner.

"He plays differently to most of my opponents, so it was tough for me. He is also a lefty. You don't play so many times against left-handers, so I'm happy to be in the next round."

Another intriguing June 4 quarter-final pits world No. 3 and two-time Grand Slam champion Carlos Alcaraz against Stefanos Tsitsipas, a two-time Major finalist.

Alcaraz boasts a 5-0 career head-to-head record over Tsitsipas with three wins on clay, with the Greek saying: "He has said in the past he likes playing against me, so I hope he gets to like it a little bit less this time."

AFP, REUTERS

Wait, wait, wait... patience is sport's unsexiest virtue

Sporting Life

Rohit Brijnath
Assistant Sports Editor

The rain falls on the Zaire morning and the fans are still chanting. "Ali, bomaye." (Ali, kill him). It's almost 50 years ago and the fighter is weary. He's mocked predictions and out-foxed George Foreman across eight violent rounds but Muhammad Ali still has the energy to explain himself.

"I jabbed him in the corners and let him tire himself out. I waited on my chance and then pow!"

That was 1974, this is 2024, but in another coliseum in Paris this is what Carlos Alcaraz has to be telling himself on June 2 against Felix Auger-Aliassime. Wait. Wait. It's an ordinary match of "ups and downs" and his best ally is patience. Alcaraz has speed, he just doesn't need to hurry.

At full power the Spaniard can light up a small town but in the first hour of a short match he is a few watts short of his usual electric self. Momentum is the wind every player wants but



Wait, wait, wait is what Carlos Alcaraz (left) tells himself on June 2 against Felix Auger-Aliassime. It's an ordinary match of "ups and downs" and his best ally is patience. It's what Auger-Aliassime will run out of. PHOTO: REUTERS

sometimes they must patiently ride the moods of a match. To wait is to trust a plan. In the first set Alcaraz hits 11 winners, in the second he slaps 16.

Patience is an attitude, which feels old-fashioned but remains trendy even in a sporting world of sweeping aggressiveness. It's a sort of unsexy athletic staple which is born of the Latin word "patientia". It means "the quality of suffering or enduring".

Patience has to become a habit because it's an everyday test. It's figuring out how long to stay with a tactic when it doesn't seem to be working. It's about playing inside the lines till you feel ready to hit them. It's about building the occasional clay-court point like an argument at an Oxford debate. It's what Auger-Aliassime will run out of.

Patience is what Loh Kean Yew admitted he ran out of last week. It's what spin bowlers ask of themselves when batters do violence unto them. It's what shooters lean on after successive 9s. Don't panic, an inner voice insists, winning is always a long run.

Patience is a voice foreign to amateurs because we don't really have an athletic future. We don't invest 10,000 unseen hours in frustrating labour while holding

on to belief like it's a life buoy. As Tiger Woods once said: "It's a process of putting one foot in front of the other and building and building."

Amateurs also don't know patience because our skills never stretch far enough. We're not Rafael Nadal, who wrote in his autobiography, "If I have to hit the ball 20 times to Federer's backhand, I'll hit it 20 times, not 19. If I have to wait for the rally to stretch to 10 shots or 12 or 15 to bide my chance to hit a winner, I'll wait."

Twenty times isn't dull repetition, it's discipline, interrogation and a control as exquisite as a juggler's. Out-thinking someone involves patience, a sort of calm before the explosion. The chess player, plotting slowly and slyly, and then executing his coup. The 10,000m runner holding steady before igniting like a firework and bursting clear of the pack.

And yet amateurs appreciate patience because loving a team demands it. Only one team win in a season and so they wait. Their team sucks and still they wait. Patience becomes the tribe's glue as they wait and weep together. It was why when they finally won a baseball World Series in 2004 after 86 years, a team official looked beyond the team: "This is for anyone who ever played for the Red Sox (and) anyone who ever rooted for the Red Sox."

Alcaraz waits on Sunday

because the best players learn to. He's just 21, but he knows tennis' peculiarities, its dips and tides, and so he stays there. In the first set he wins 40 per cent of second serve points, in the second 56, in the third 71. Patience – and Stefanos Tsitsipas is about to test it in the next round – is about not being shaken off your path.

Matches, in any sport, can seem familiar but all are unique. One day shadows annoy, the next day the wind teases. Timing flees and a rival produces shots he's never hit before. Hang in there, athletes mutter. Great players – like Novak Djokovic against Lorenzo Musetti – love five sets because they have the resources to play well for long. They'll wait your talent out. Patience is a form of survival.

Across the Atlantic Ocean from Alcaraz, in another sport, a young woman reminds us of the power of waiting. Golfer Yuka Saso hadn't won an LPGA title for three years but stayed true to her practice, her routine, her dreams.

One day, who knows?

And then one day comes on June 2. She wins the US Open and speaks constantly about the value of patience. But to endure the endless provocations of sport, its bad bounces and cursed twists of fate, is more exhausting than we appreciate. It's why when the waiting paid off, Saso does the only thing athletes can.

She cries.

TRIPPIER BACKS ENGLAND TO WIN EURO 2024

Defender says they have the team and the togetherness to end 58-year title drought

BE BOLD

We shouldn't be shy to say that we can win it... We've got a great squad, top manager, top staff. We've been so close recently over so many years, it's just about taking that next step now. I fully believe with this squad that we've got, we can go all the way. But we need to earn the right.

”

KIERAN TRIPPIER, England defender, on the Three Lions being title contenders at Euro 2024.

LONDON – England defender Kieran Trippier has backed the Three Lions to finally end their 58-year trophy drought by winning Euro 2024.

Gareth Southgate's side will head to Germany as one of the tournament favourites after ending fourth at the World Cup in 2018, finishing as Euro 2020 runners-up and reaching the World Cup quarter-finals in 2022.

England's men have never won the European Championship and last lifted a major prize at the 1966 World Cup.

Newcastle United right-back Trippier, who will captain England in the June 3 friendly against Bosnia and Herzegovina, is convinced they are primed to get their hands on silverware at last. The match took place after press time.

"I've said it many times, we shouldn't be shy to say that we can

win it," the 33-year-old said on June 2.

"We're not saying that in an arrogant way. We've got a great squad, top manager, top staff. We've been so close recently over so many years, it's just about taking that next step now.

"I fully believe with this squad that we've got, we can go all the way. But we need to earn the right.

"The most important thing is the togetherness we've got in the squad.

"It's unbelievable, probably the best I've been involved in, so we're all looking forward to it."

Phil Foden shared that optimism, saying England have been gradually improving as a team and are hoping to give their supporters a "once-in-a-lifetime" feeling by winning the Euro.

"It's just nice to see that we can compete against the top nations and reach those latter stages of tournaments. In the past, England teams struggled to do it," the Manchester City star told the Daily Mail in an interview published on



England's Kieran Trippier (in white vest) training with Joe Gomez ahead of their friendly match against Bosnia and Herzegovina on June 3. The Newcastle United right-back will captain his country at St James' Park. PHOTO: REUTERS

June 1.

"Gareth's been building for a bit now and we're stepping ahead in the right direction.

"Playing now, you get goosebumps. That full stadium roar. The national anthem. It's something you always saw as a kid growing up, knowing you want to be an England player. It's a feeling I'd love for people to have, that once-in-a-lifetime thing."

Southgate has given Jude Bellingham the week off to decompress before reporting to his England squad, saying rest was most important for the La Liga Player of the Season on the heels of his remarkable campaign.

The 20-year-old helped Real Madrid to wrap up the La Liga title, before winning the Champions League final against Borussia Dortmund at Wembley on June 1.

"The most important thing for Jude is rest, recovery, and we will benefit from that," Southgate said after England's training session at Middlesbrough's ground on June 2.

"That's the constraints of international football. We don't have the players as often as you do at a club to quite be as cohesive.

"So, you have to work out what are the most important things. And at this moment in time in my opinion for Jude, and therefore for the team, is time to recover and psychologically switch off."

Meanwhile, Southgate is encouraged by the progress of Harry Maguire and Luke Shaw as the injured defenders aim to prove their fitness.

Maguire and Shaw missed Manchester United's 2-1 FA Cup final win over City on May 25 as they recover from muscle problems.

Southgate included both players in his 33-man provisional squad, but the England boss needed to see signs of improvement in their health before the June 7 deadline to finalise his 26-man group for the tournament.

He is also weighing up the attacking options and said that while Jack Grealish has not played as much as he would have liked this season, he is still in the running to make the cut.

Asked if the City midfielder was in danger of missing out, Southgate said: "I don't think we're defining that just yet. I think we know where we're likely to be..."

"This season he has not played as much. I'm sure he would have liked that to be different but we know the qualities he can bring. He is a player we enjoy working with." AFP, REUTERS

Nagelsmann slams 'racist' poll on skin colour

MUNICH – Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann on June 2 said a poll ordered by German broadcaster ARD that asked about the colour of national players' skin was racist, adding that he was stunned it was even conducted.

The poll said that about one-fifth of those questioned said they wanted more white players in the team.

On June 1, national player Joshua Kimmich called the poll racist and

his coach agreed.

"Josh responded really well, with a very clear and thoughtful statement," Nagelsmann told a press conference. "I see this in exactly the same way."

Kimmich had said a day earlier: "Anyone who's grown up with football knows this is absolute nonsense. Football in particular is a good example of how you can unite different nations, different skin colours and different religions.

"That's what our team is all about. I would miss a lot of players if they weren't here. This is absolutely racist and has no place in our changing room."

Both Kimmich and Nagelsmann are white.

Germany's provisional team ahead of the June 14-July 14 European Championship on home soil has black players, as well as players with Turkish background – such as captain Ilkay Gundogan – among

others.

The broadcaster said a reporter working on an ARD documentary on football and diversity was repeatedly confronted with statements about the team's composition during the making of the documentary. It said it commissioned the poll in order to have measurable facts on such statements.

"I was shocked that such questions are asked and people actually answer," Nagelsmann said.

Kimmich also took aim at the question, adding: "When you consider that we are about to host a European Championship at home, it's absurd to ask such a question when the aim is actually to unite the whole country.

"It's about achieving great things together. As a team, we're trying to get everyone in Germany behind us."

Nagelsmann added that "we need to wake up".

He said: "It is racist. I feel we need to wake up. Many people in Europe had to flee... searching for a safe country.

"In Germany we are living well and we tend to shut out these things. A football team can be a role model of how to unite different cultures, religious backgrounds and skin colour.

"It is good the way it is now. We play a Euro for everyone in the country and whoever plays top football is invited to be a national team member. I hope I never have to read such crap polls again."

Germany open the tournament with their Group A match against Scotland on June 14 in Munich. REUTERS

Real's new aim – 16th Champions League crown

MADRID – Real Madrid celebrated the Spanish La Liga title with thousands of supporters in May, pledging to return in June with the Champions League trophy.

Los Blancos delivered on their promise, defeating Borussia Dortmund 2-0 at Wembley to claim a record 15th European Cup on June 1.

The triumphant players hit the city's usual celebration hot spots on June 2 before ending up at the club's Santiago Bernabeu Stadium where the party finished, for now at least.

Paris Saint-Germain striker Kylian Mbappe's expected signing in the coming days should see the festivities continue.

On June 3, he was left out of France's 25-man preliminary squad for a training camp ahead of the Paris Olympics. While this does not mean he has been ruled out of the Games, Real are reportedly not keen on his participation as the European Championship ends less than two weeks before the Olympic football competition starts.

"Vinicius, Ballon d'Or" chants were heard at intervals from fans throughout the afternoon, after the Brazilian netted Real's second goal in the final to clinch victory.

Dani Carvajal had opened the scoring with his first Champions League goal in eight seasons, against the run of play after Dortmund had dominated.

However, as they so often tend to do, Real found a way to survive and ultimately thrive.

The team's stars, led by president Florentino Perez, made their first stop at the city's Alameda cathedral.

"I don't know which team Jesus would support, but I know that... he



Real Madrid's players parade on their bus in Madrid's Cibeles square to celebrate their 15th Champions League trophy on June 2, one day after beating Borussia Dortmund in London. PHOTO: AFP

would surely appreciate this Cup," said the cardinal archbishop of Madrid, Jose Cobo, who was left with a replica trophy.

The team then returned to the Madrid regional government's headquarters to present another replica to president Isabel Diaz Ayuso, whom they also met after winning La Liga.

"If we are here, it's because there's good news," said Real captain Nacho Fernandez. "Once again, we are champions of Europe. It seems easy to say – 15-time champions... I hope it's many more times."

Nacho, along with Carvajal, the retiring Toni Kroos and Luka Modric, reached a career sixth Cham-

pions League victory, equalling the record set by former Real winger Paco Gento well over half a century earlier.

Germany international Kroos was singled out for special praise by chief Perez, having set up Carvajal's winner in his final match for Los Blancos after a decade at the club.

"We are the kings of Europe," sang Carvajal, 32, to thousands of white-shirted fans massed in a central square, Puerta del Sol, before calling on Kroos to take the spotlight.

"Three weeks ago I promised you we'd be back," said Kroos, while fans chanted for him to stay.

"Many thanks for 10 unforgetta-

ble years, I have no more words."

While the 34-year-old midfielder is departing, Real's success is likely to continue.

"I have already told you that this club is currently working towards the realisation of a new dream – namely the 16th European Cup," said Perez. AFP, REUTERS

S'PORE IN THE MIX FOR WORLD CHESS C'SHIP

New Delhi, Chennai also want Ding-Gukesh clash; Fide's final decision later this month

Melvyn Teoh

Singapore has thrown its hat into the ring in the bid to host the World Chess Championship, which is provisionally scheduled for Nov 20 to Dec 15.

On June 1, the International Chess Federation (Fide) revealed on social media that three host ci-

ties have submitted their bids for the event, which will feature China's world champion Ding Liren going up against Indian challenger Gukesh Dommaraju.

The other two cities are India's New Delhi and Chennai, the latter being the home town of Gukesh.

Gukesh, 18, is the youngest challenger for the world title in history and earned his spot to face Ding by

winning the 2024 Candidates Tournament in Toronto in April.

Chennai last hosted the world championship in 2013, when Norwegian challenger Magnus Carlsen dethroned home favourite and holder Viswanathan Anand.

Fide said on its website: "All three bids will be discussed at the upcoming Fide Council meeting scheduled for next week.

"The representatives of all three bids will be invited to the meeting to share more details and answer questions. The final decision will be made by the Fide Council later

this month."

The Singapore Chess Federation (SCF) had previously expressed its interest to host Fide's marquee event on May 6.

Fide's chief executive, grandmaster Emil Sutovsky, told Chess-Base India that officials are all "so excited" to be receiving multiple bids.

He added: "It was a moment of truth, because even till the last moment we didn't know the number of bids that we would be receiving. We've got three bids, and (they are) all are very serious bids, I think it is

a record number in recent history.

"All of the bids are backed by relevant guarantees and by government support as well, so these are all profound ones."

SCF chief executive Kevin Goh previously said that the federation is consulting a few parties from the private and government sectors "to see whether a bid is feasible".

One of the issues it needed to resolve was the US\$8.5 million (\$11.5 million) hosting budget, of which US\$2.5 million will be used for prize money, US\$1.1 million to Fide for licensing fees and the rest for venue and organising costs.

On Singapore's interest to host the tournament, Sutovsky added: "Singapore has done a tremendous preparation for this bid, I've been in constant touch with Kevin..."

"I can tell that Singapore is aiming to leverage on its geographical location and multi-cultural society, so it is natural for them to want to host the match."

Singapore has a growing chess scene and boasts five grandmasters and one woman grandmaster.

Siddharth Jagadeesh on May 21 became the youngest Singaporean grandmaster at 17 after earning his three required norms for the title.

He hopes to see the event come to Singapore, adding: "It'll be very exciting if that happens, and it'd be a great boost to the game throughout the country, because it's the most prestigious tournament in chess and it has a long history, longer than many sports."

When contacted, national agency Sport Singapore said: "Under Sport Singapore's major sport event strategy, we seek to bring in different types of sports to cater to the wide range of interests that the community has.

"Singapore Chess Federation's bid to host the Fide World Chess Championships will add vibrancy to our local sporting calendar and elevate the profile of mind sports within our local community. We are looking forward to possibly having the world's best chess players compete on our shores."

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Four-gold Olympic champion Simone Biles performing her floor exercise routine at the 2024 US Gymnastics Championships in Fort Worth, Texas on June 2. The 27-year-old took gold en route to sweeping all five titles. PHOTO: REUTERS

Biles proud of progress after dominant win

LOS ANGELES – Simone Biles won a record-extending ninth US all-around gymnastics title on June 2, signalling that she is a force in the sport as the Paris Olympics approach, even as a couple of miscues gave her something to work on before the US trials.

"Today it's just getting out here, getting comfortable and confident in my gymnastics, and hopefully going to Olympic trials and making that next step towards Paris," she told broadcaster NBC after piling up 59.300 points on the second

night of competition to take her total to 119.750.

She was almost six points clear of runner-up Skye Blakely, who totalled 113.850, with Kayla DiCello taking bronze with 110.800.

The top two finishers were assured of berths at the Olympic trials from June 27-30 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where at least a dozen athletes are expected to make their final case for a trip to Paris.

Biles had cracked 60 points on the first night of competition on

May 31, and while she could not match that, she earned gold on all four apparatus.

The 27-year-old said: "I couldn't be more proud of how I'm doing this time in the year, and just gaining that confidence over and over, getting myself back in front of a crowd and just doing what I do in practice."

Biles missed much of the Tokyo Games due to the "twisties" – a mental block where gymnasts are disoriented in mid-air.

She then stepped away from

competition for two years but looked sharper and more resilient than ever in Fort Worth, Texas, where she brought her career national titles to 32.

The sheer power that has helped Biles grab four Olympic gold medals and build an array of daunting signature skills was in evidence in her few errors.

She stepped out of bounds after her triple-twisting double somersault in floor exercise and skittered backwards onto her back on the landing of her Yurchenko double

pike vault.

The vault is so difficult that she still scored 15.000 points – down from the 15.800 she earned on May 31.

Biles said she has no trouble taking that kind of mistake in stride.

"It's not my first time out there," she said.

"I'm a little bit older, so I know exactly how to kind of reboot and recollect myself to move on to the next event, even if I feel like something wasn't how I wanted it to go."

Among those who will be trying to punch their tickets to Paris, Blakely displayed impressive consistency over two days.

Sunisa Lee, the Tokyo Olympic all-around champion, was an impressive fourth as she continues her return from career-threatening kidney disease.

Shortly after competition ended, USA Gymnastics confirmed it had accepted petitions from Shilese Jones and Kaliya Lincoln to compete at trials, despite injuries in Texas.

Jones withdrew with a shoulder injury, while Lincoln pulled out after two apparatus on May 31 with an ankle injury.

"It's feeling a little bit better today than it has this whole week," Jones told NBC Sports. AFP, REUTERS

With sevens series gold, Australian women confident for Olympics

MELBOURNE – Australia will head to the Paris Olympics targeting a second women's rugby sevens gold medal, after toppling the powerful New Zealand team on the way to victory in the inaugural SVNS series grand final in Madrid.

Maddison Levi scored a hat-trick of tries in the June 2 decider against Olympic hosts France as the Australians ran out comfortable 26-7 winners.

However, it was the 21-19 semi-final win over arch-rivals and Olympic champions New Zealand that was the main tonic for Tim Walsh's team.

New Zealand had swept the previous four events but finished with the bronze medal in Madrid after beating Canada 26-14.

"We're finally getting some pay for our hard work, which is good," said Levi.

"It's so close to the Olympics, we're finally building.

"Having not beaten New Zealand since Perth (in January), it's always



Australia's Maddison Levi scoring a try despite the challenge of France's Valentine Lothoz in the World Rugby Sevens women's final in Madrid on June 2. PHOTO: AFP

a tough battle between the two and I think for it to finally just click and just to work hard, it just proves that we've got it."

Australia won the inaugural Olympic tournament at the 2016 Rio Games but their title defence ended in the quarter-finals in Tokyo in 2021.

However, with the help of Maddison and her younger sister Teagan, Australia have re-emerged as

New Zealand's main threat to their bid for back-to-back gold medals.

Maddison finished the SVNS season with 69 tries, the second-highest individual tally ever among men and women.

Vilimoni Delasau scored 83 tries for the Fiji's men team in the inaugural 1999-2000 season.

France's men will enter their home Games with confidence after beating Argentina 19-5 in the grand

final, with Antoine Dupont helping to set up captain Paulin Riva for the decisive third try with an off-load.

Dupont, scrum-half in the 15-man format, has invigorated France's sevens programme since skipping the Six Nations to focus on the Olympics.

"We think Antoine Dupont is the best player in the world and when he is on the pitch we have a lot of confidence," said Riva.

"We are all very happy today."

Dupont won the Men's Rookie of the Year award.

"I was honestly a bit worried before my first tournament, so I tried to work very hard to be ready for Vancouver and Los Angeles but there was a very good team spirit in the team, so it was easy to join them," he said.

"I hope it will be a huge tournament for us," he added of the Games.

"Obviously we want to win, but we're not the only team, so we have two months to work as hard as we can to be ready and to try and lift the trophy in July."

Fiji, gold medal winners in Rio and Tokyo, have been far from their dominant best through the SVNS series but took the bronze in Madrid by beating New Zealand 17-10. REUTERS

LOTTERY

TOTO

Mon, 3 Jun 2024 Draw No. 3979/2024

Group 1 Prize \$1,250,273

Winning Numbers

01 28 30 32 33 39 11

Add. No.

Prize Group	Share Amount	No. of Winning Shares
Group 1	\$1,250,273	1
Group 2	\$263,216	1
Group 3	\$2,382	76
Group 4	\$389	254
Group 5	\$50	4,932
Group 6	\$25	6,917
Group 7	\$10	89,899

Group 1 prize and total share amount for Group 1 may differ due to rounding.

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Singapore Sports Awards 2024

FIRST-TIME GONGS FOR PEREIRA AND ONG

Different lanes, but similar results for Sportswoman runner, Sportsman bowler

Kimberly Kwek

It was a big night for athletics at the Singapore Sports Awards on June 3, with national sprinter Shanti Pereira and her coach Luis Cunha named Sportswoman of the Year and Coach of the Year for their feats in 2023.

Pereira, who won the award for the first time, also became the first track and field athlete to receive the top distinction at the annual ceremony since discus thrower James Wong was named Sportsman of the Year in 2004.

The last track and field athlete to win the Sportswoman of the Year award was middle-distance runner Kandasamy Jayamani, who won the accolade in 1981 and 1977.

Pereira, who was unable to attend the ceremony at Orchard Hotel as she is in Europe preparing for the Olympics, emerged as the winner ahead of kayaker Stephenie Chen, wushu exponent Kimberly Ong, indoor skydiver Kyra Poh, swimmer Letitia Sim and bowler Cherie Tan.

The 27-year-old said: "It's a huge honour to be named Sportswoman of the Year, it's my first time ever being nominated, let alone win."

"I'm very thankful to my coach. He is extremely deserving of his Coach of the Year award, I'm so glad he is being recognised for his efforts in my journey, as well as the impact he has made for Singapore athletics as a whole and my entire support system for getting me here."

Pereira started 2023 with a historic sprint double at the Cambodia SEA Games in May, when she won the women's 100m and 200m titles, before repeating the feat at the Asian Athletics Championships two months later.

She then made history as the first Singaporean runner to reach the semi-finals of the world championships in Budapest, booking her ticket to the Paris Olympics in the process.

At the Hangzhou Asian Games, she capped off her year with an impressive showing by bagging the 200m crown along with a 100m silver.

She also rewrote the 100m national mark six times and the 200m record four times.

Reflecting on last season, Pereira said: "2023 launched me into a new era in my career. I'm privileged to do the sport I love every day, and I hope to continue to do myself, my coach, my support system and my country proud for as



Shanti Pereira's father Clarence accepting the Sportswoman of the Year award on her behalf from Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong on June 3. ST PHOTOS: MARK CHEONG



Sportsboy of the Year Maximilian Maeder (centre) taking a selfie with Joseph Schooling and SNOC president Grace Fu after the Singapore Sports Awards.

long as my legs can carry."

The Sportsman of the Year award also had a first-time winner in Darren Ong, who is the first bowler to pick up the accolade since Remy Ong in 2007.

The other nominees for the award were Peter Gilchrist (cue sports), Ryan Lo (sailing) and Jo-

wen Lim (wushu).

A breakthrough 2023 culminated in Darren claiming the men's singles title at the International Bowling Federation world championships in Kuwait last October, the first for a Singaporean since Remy won the event in 2006.

Darren also won two bronzes at

the world championships – in the men's doubles with Jaris Goh and in the all-events.

He had bagged his first individual international title at the Philippine International Open in May, just months before his triumph on the world stage.

The 28-year-old said: "This (award) is not just for myself but my family and the entire bowling community... It's a privilege to be the one to win the award because it's been a long time since the award has been won by a bowler."

"It's definitely been a breakout year for me and a lot of the achievements haven't quite sunk in yet, especially this award."

Organised by the Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) and Sport Singapore (SportSG), the annual ceremony honours outstanding sporting achievements of those who have done well at the national and international levels.

The event, which is supported by the Tote Board, was attended by SNOC president Grace Fu and Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong.

Twice kitefoiling world champion Maximilian Maeder, 17, bagged the Sportsboy of the Year award for the third time in a row, while wushu world champion Zeanne Law picked up the Sportsgirl of the Year accolade.

"I'm completely ecstatic – it's completely different when I get to be here and see so many people support me on my journey and so many people support athletes on their journeys," said Max, who said one of his night's highlights was speaking with 2016 Olympic champion swimmer Joseph Schooling.

"It instils you with such inspiration and a will to continue to do what you love to do and I hope that all the athletes experience the same thing."

Law, 18, was honoured that her achievements were recognised, adding: "It's a testament to all the hard work, all the struggles that I've gone through last year and I believe it will motivate me to push even harder this year."

kimkwek@sph.com.sg

KEEP ON RUNNING

I'm privileged to do the sport I love every day, and I hope to continue to do myself, my coach, my support system and my country proud for as long as my legs can carry.



SHANTI PEREIRA, sprinter, on being voted Sportswoman of the Year.

ONE FOR ALL

This (award) is not just for myself but my family and the entire bowling community.



DARREN ONG, bowler, on being voted Sportsman of the Year.

HUGE LIFT

It instils you with such inspiration and a will to continue to do what you love to do and I hope that all the athletes experience the same thing.



MAXIMILIAN MAEDER, kitefoiler, on being voted Sportsboy of the Year.

MAKES IT ALL WORTHWHILE

It's a testament to all the hard work, all the struggles that I've gone through last year and I believe it will motivate me to push even harder this year.



ZEANNE LAW, wushu exponent, on being voted Sportsgirl of the Year.

HONOUR ROLL

Sportsman of the Year
Darren Ong (bowling)

Sportswoman of the Year
Shanti Pereira (athletics)

Sportsboy of the Year
Maximilian Maeder (sailing)

Sportsgirl of the Year
Zeanne Law (wushu)

Coach of the Year
Luis Cunha (athletics)

Team of the Year (team sport)
Women's floorball team

Team of the Year (event)
Women's bowling team (2023 World Bowling Championships) – Charmaine Chang, Colleen Pee, New Hui Fen, Shayna Ng, Cherie Tan, Daphne Tan

Chess • S'pore, New Delhi and Chennai bid for World C'ship | B15



Tennis • Rybakina issues title warning as de Minaur stuns Medvedev | B13

Rohit Brijnath • Patience is an attitude that feels old-fashioned but remains trendy | B13

Golf • Saso is first Japanese and first Filipina to win US Women's Open | B12





RAIL GOOD TIME
Luxury train to Malaysia gets a refresh | **C3&4**

life

EUROPE'S CHANGING HOT SPOTS
Rising prices and mercury draw crowds to new cities | **C2**

NON-STOP HUSTLE
EDM star Alan Walker's constant reinvention | **C5**



SAFE AND SAND IN JORDAN

Travel Journal

Tourism has dried up since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, but the country is still safe to visit



Cherie Lok

JORDAN – I have been walking for about half an hour when I see it. Peeking out through a crack in the coppery sandstone walls that frame my trek into the cradle of civilisation is the first of Petra's many architectural marvels.

The passageway widens, then narrows. Light floods in as I step onto the sandy plaza and gaze up at The Treasury, an elaborate rock-cut tomb thought to be built in the 1st century AD by the Nabataeans, an ancient Arab people.

Immediately, about a dozen cameras are raised into the air. Tourists fan out, each trying to snap that unobstructed shot.

And, as I am told by a nearby shopkeeper, this crowd is much thinner than the hordes that usually descend on Petra at this time of year.

Each smartphone-touting, keffiyeh headdress-wearing visitor bears promise – the chance to earn a few precious dinars, which, in 2024, has become more elusive than ever.

Since the start of the war in October 2023 between Hamas and Israel, which borders Jordan, tourists have been in short supply.

A receptionist at Nomads Hotel, where my husband and I stay in Amman, says while the property is usually full in March, only 70 per cent of the hotel's rooms were booked in 2024.

"People are scared to come, but they don't understand that Jordan is still very safe," he says.

Our driver, Saad, insists likewise, saying: "Jordan is friends with everybody."

Despite the bright smiles of those in the hospitality industry, the country is not exactly an oasis of calm neutrality. Many Jordanians – including Queen Rania – have Palestinian roots, and their grief is palpable.

Thousands have taken to the streets in pro-Palestine demonstrations for months, demanding that the government re-evaluate its ties to Israel. We do not, however, encounter any during our one night in the capital city.

Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs advises those travelling to Jordan to avoid large crowds and monitor the local news. It does not urge tourists to stay away from the country as a whole – just the areas near the Syrian border.

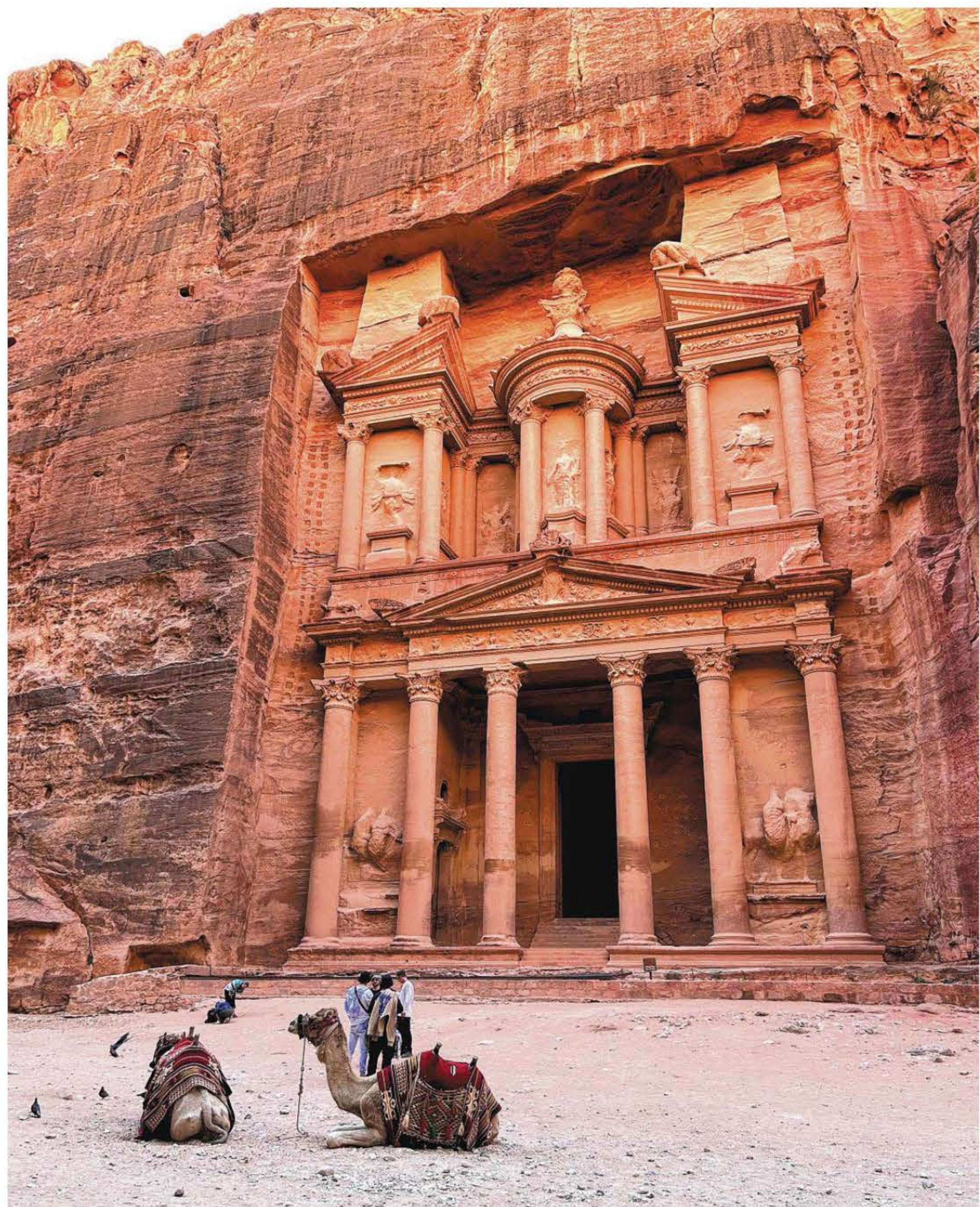
We stick mainly to cities in the south and feel fairly safe during the trip. In Petra, we even have to dodge police cars zipping through the narrow lanes of the Siq gorge that leads into the city at regular intervals.

Still, the heightened security presence has not been enough to lure tourists back to the "Rose City".

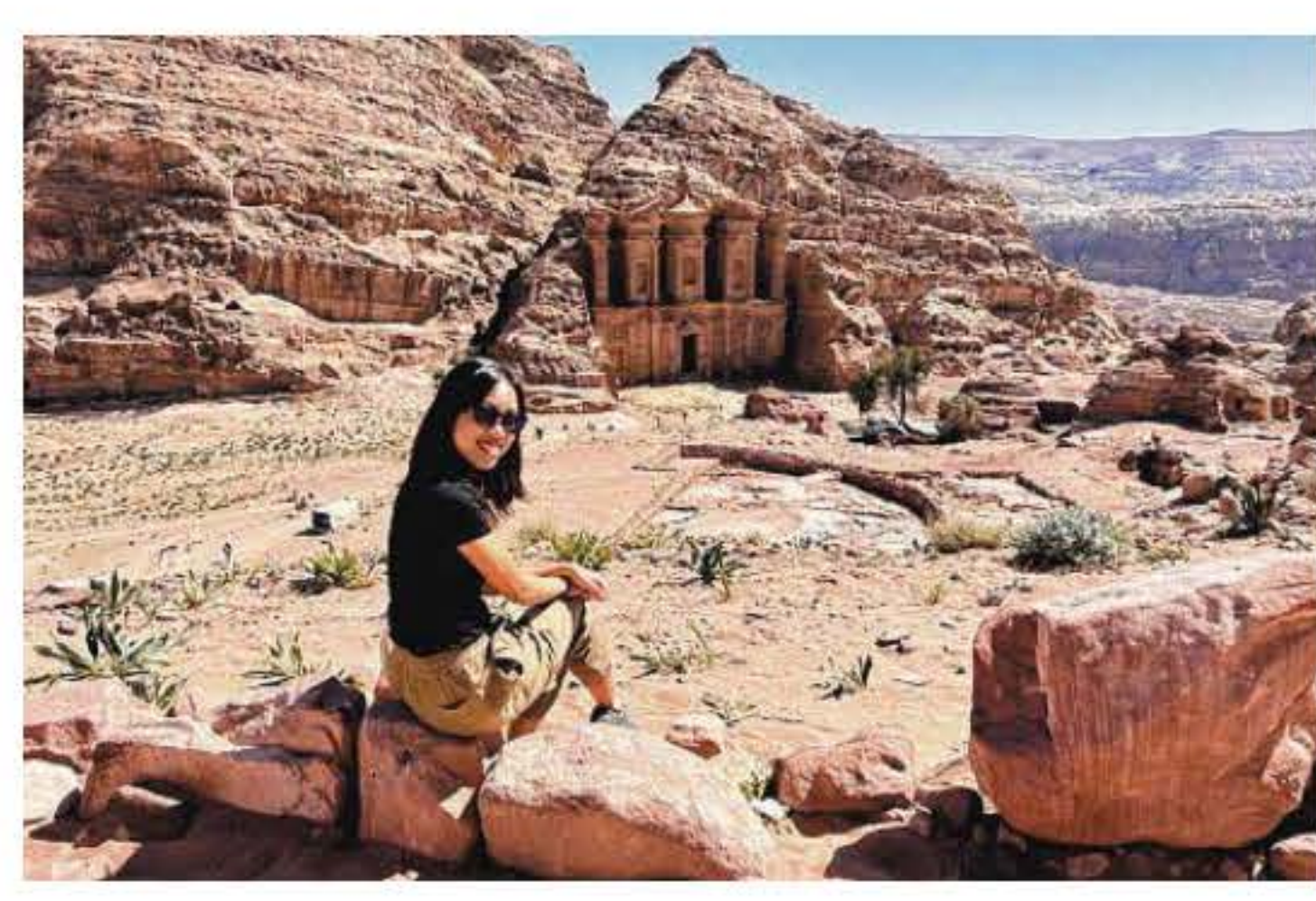
"Normally, we have several thousand visitors a day," another shopkeeper, Yunis, tells me. "Now, only 500."

He pulls a handful of crinkled notes from his pocket and waves them indignantly.

"Look. I got here at 6am and it's already evening, but I've made only



(Above) The plaza in front of the rock-cut tomb known as The Treasury is usually crowded with tourists during high season. (Below) The writer taking a hard-earned break after a 900-step hike up to Petra's Monastery. ST PHOTOS: CHERIE LOK



17 dinars (\$\$32)."

Take a walk through Petra and you will understand his desperation.

The city may have been built by the ancient Nabataean people and inhabited in recent history by nomadic Bedouin tribes, but these days, it is mainly foreign visitors who traverse its rocky paths.

The last Bedouins were forced to leave after Petra became a Unesco World Heritage Site in the mid-1980s. Now, they return only to hawk their wares.

I take along my own water – no way am I paying 3 dinars for a bottle here – but buy a rug from a woman who has parked herself

halfway up the 900-step climb to The Monastery.

She gives me a discount because at 1pm, I am her first customer. This, after painstakingly lugging heavy bags of trinkets up the ascending path at the crack of dawn, albeit with the help of a donkey.

Of course, I do not know if I really am her first customer. She does also tell me that the rug is handmade and original. Delighted with my steal, I thank her, then walk several metres down the path and see the very same one draped over the front of another stall.

CONTINUED on C2

Travel Journal

Sleep under the stars in a desert



TRAVEL TIPS

Despite my initial misgivings, I have no regrets about visiting Jordan during this period. The country is safe and easy to navigate. English is widely spoken, especially in the capital city of Amman, and Petra.

There are no direct flights to Jordan from Singapore. I fly first to Dubai on Emirates, which takes seven hours. After a three-hour layover, I board a Royal Jordanian flight to Jordan, which takes about 3½ hours.

Think twice about animal rides. The first thing locals try to sell you when you enter Petra is a horse ride to the entrance of the Siq, the narrow gorge leading to the ancient city. Later, they may coax you to climb onto a camel or take a donkey up to the Monastery.

While some tourists might need the assistance, many guidebooks – and Peta, or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals – have warned of the mistreatment of animals in Petra and advise against it. It is also said that the hooves of donkeys are wearing down the delicate steps leading to the Monastery.

If you do decide to ride an animal in Petra or Wadi Rum, make sure it is healthy and strong. Report any signs of animal abuse, such as wounds or signs of malnutrition, to the visitor centre.

Be prepared to do lots of walking and climbing in Petra and Wadi Rum. Not all of this will be on flat ground – there will be times you need to scramble up a slope or pick your way through a tumble of rocks. In such cases, it helps to have a good pair of shoes with a strong grip.

You can technically explore Wadi Rum independently, but will have to do it without Google Maps – or any internet connection, for that matter – and only a handful of discernible landmarks.

To make sure you do not end up stranded in the sandy heart of the desert, get a guide who knows how to tell one mountain apart from another.

Ours, whom we find through Wadi Rum Nomads (wadirumnomads.com, 140 dinars or S\$267 for two people for a one-day, one-night jeep tour inclusive of meals and accommodation), also acts as a driver, cook, historian and photographer.

My husband and I hire a private driver we find on Tripadvisor to drive us between cities. If you want a truly hassle-free trip, this is the way to go. For inquiries, call Ali on +962-77-613-8982.

Alternatively, public buses, such as the Jett bus (www.jett.com.jo/en), run between cities, such as the popular route between Amman to Petra.

FROM CI

From Petra, I head towards Wadi Rum in the country's south, where I feel the presence of other tourists more acutely.

Stepping onto the desert landscape of Wadi Rum is like being transported to another world, which is why movies set on Mars are sometimes filmed here.

Burnt orange sand dunes undulate across a great expanse, punctuated only by sun-scorched bushes and massive, towering rock outcrops, some of them as high as mountains.

Here, you can close your eyes, feel the sun on your skin, taste the crisp, smogless desert air and imagine life as a Bedouin nomad.

That is, if you can blot out the masses of tourists swarming each attraction. After about half an hour of scrambling up rocks, we hop into our jeeps and speed off in different directions, only to regroup later at another boulder or canyon.

Though the presence of other visitors feels disruptive at first, I come to appreciate our little sunburnt caravan.

At one point, our guide Hamed leaves our group of five – my husband and me, a British adventure junkie, and a father-son pair from the Netherlands – alone to trek through a canyon. We make it

out, thanks to the sharp eyes of Chris, the Dutch son, who spots what initially looks like a dead end.

As promised, Hamed is waiting for us on the other side with piping hot cups of tea. We sit down to chat with him and his fellow guides. We cheer on other tourists as they try to sandboard down a dune, and share their laughter when they topple over.

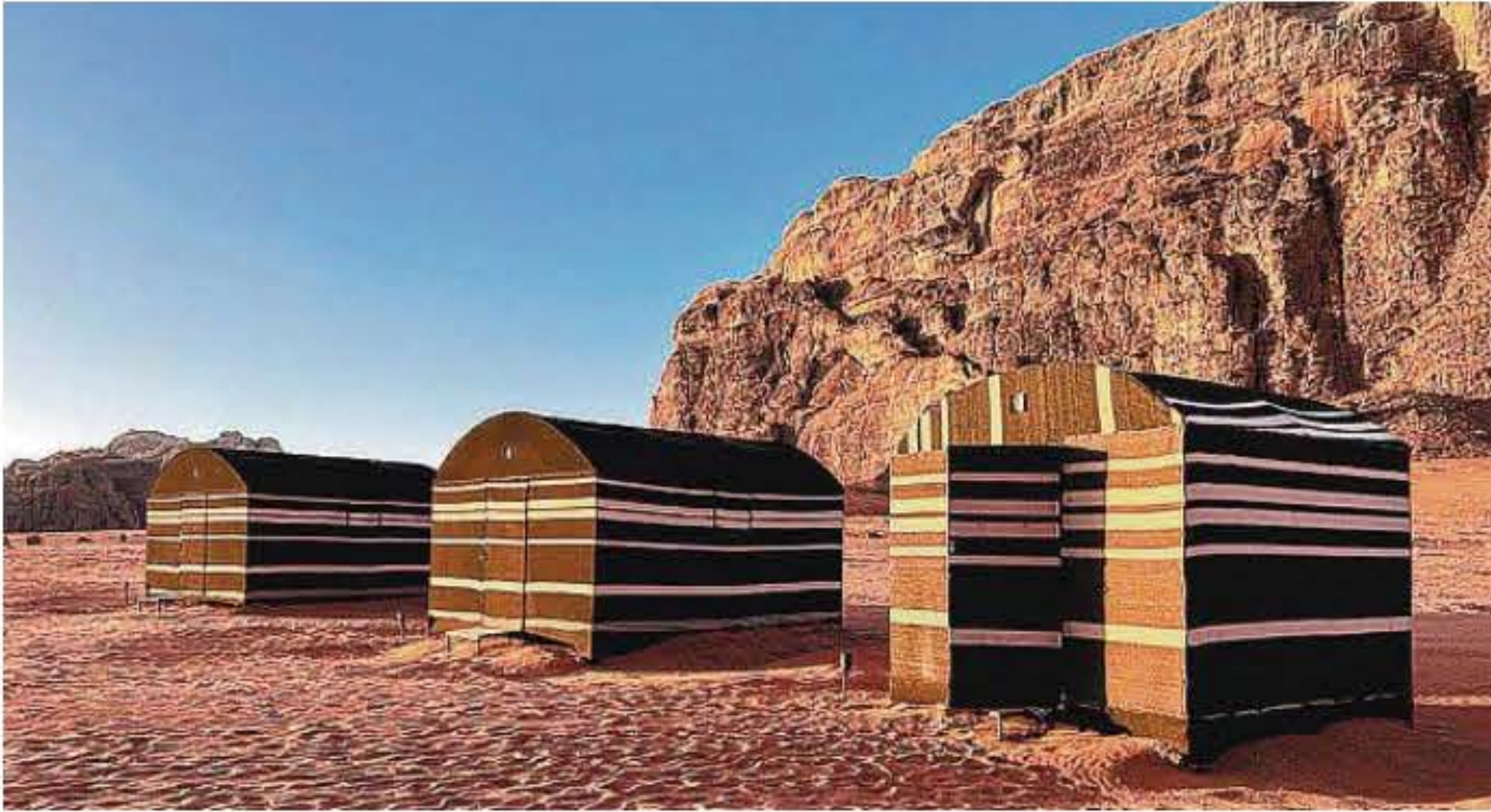
It is a picture-perfect afternoon, and I start to realise why Hamed has spent all day seeking the company of others.

"We travel in a big group of about 35 families," says Hamed, who comes from a nomadic family of nine children, currently camped where the grass is literally greener near the Saudi Arabian border.

"We are all friends here. Some of us are even cousins," he says with smiles, gesturing to the rest of the guides.

Perhaps this camaraderie is part of the authentic Bedouin experience. Sure, not all of our trip is culturally accurate, but we do get a taste of Hamed's everyday life, as well as the warm hospitality his people are known for.

We gather firewood to help him prepare a tomato stew lunch in the back of our jeep, hunt for a shady place to enjoy our afternoon siesta and learn how to wrap a keffiyeh around our heads.



(Above) A Bedouin guide prepping lunch in the back of his jeep. (Left) Tents in the desert, where the writer spends the night. ST PHOTOS: CHERIE LOK

Later that evening, full from a meal of roast chicken baked in the sand, we lounge around the fire pit at our base camp as Hamed and another guide strum a folk song on a lute. There are about 15 of us camping that night under an impossibly starry sky.

Ms Bianca Abma – who helps run Wadi Rum Nomads, the tour agency that takes us into the desert – says it is the optimum group size. "Any larger and the guides won't be able to give each guest their full attention," she adds.

The base camp usually accommodates around 26 visitors a night

at its peak, which Ms Abma admits can sometimes feel too crowded.

The lull in tourism is not just good for travellers; it also gives the desert some time to breathe.

Ms Abma reminds us to clean up after ourselves, warning that tourists can do immeasurable damage to the natural environment. Indeed, along the way, I spot discarded plastic plates, empty bottles and signs of trampled vegetation.

Petra, too, has been worn down by years of footfall. Throngs of visitors stamping along its paths and touching its facades threaten to erode some of the ancient city's

sandstone features.

In the long term, Ms Abma hopes that the number of visitors to the desert will be regulated by careful, deliberate policy, rather than war.

But even those who visit now can tread lightly – if only to make sure the breathtaking beauty of Jordan's wonders lives on to thrill future generations.

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• Travel Journal is a new series offering a personal take on current travel issues. For more travel stories, go to str.sg/travel

Rising prices and mercury are changing Europe's travel hot spots this summer

Travellers are increasingly opting to skip Europe's most-visited cities and beachside locales in favour of less-frequented destinations for summer vacations in 2024.

Fresh data shared with Bloomberg by Chase Travel, a US-based travel booking and rewards platform, shows that cities with the biggest year-on-year tourism increases this summer include Brussels, Munich, Zurich and Warsaw.

The data, based on cardmember spending, shows that the most-booked cities are still London, Paris and Rome.

The shifting emphasis towards secondary cities largely reflects surging prices in Mediterranean hot spots like the Amalfi

Coast, as well as record heat on the continent, say industry experts.

Soaring inflation put average luxury room rates in Europe above US\$1,700 (S\$2,300) in 2023, according to data from Virtuoso, a luxury travel adviser group – almost double 2019's US\$900 figure.

These record rates are set to climb by an additional 9 per cent this summer, says Ms Misty Belles, Virtuoso's vice-president for global public relations. This is affecting where people choose to book, she adds.

"We're seeing a desire to go to locations or destinations where the rates aren't so exorbitant," she says, confirming Chase's findings.

A search on Google Hotels shows rooms at five-star hotels in Brus-



Cities with the biggest year-on-year tourism increases this summer include destinations such as Brussels (above left), Munich (above right), Zurich and Warsaw. PHOTOS: PIXABAY



sels available for less than US\$500 during the first week of June.

In Paris, the price is closer to US\$900.

Ms Belles also says travellers are willing to try alternate destinations in the face of Europe's heatwaves.

Last year was the continent's second-warmest on record, and each month of 2024 has brought further records.

With the mercury having risen to

48 deg C in places such as Sardinia last summer, 24 deg C average highs in Zurich look awfully appealing. And that is without considering the crowds.

"Last summer, Europe was so very crowded, on top of being unbelievably hot," says Ms Belles.

The combination has made more people seek destinations further north in Europe, she adds, with bookings at Virtuoso to the Netherlands up 33 per cent, bookings to

Austria up 31 per cent and those to Germany 26 per cent.

"Don't worry about Italy, it's going to be fine," Ms Belles says. "But other parts of Europe are starting to attract significant numbers."

One place where growth has triggered concern is Amsterdam.

The city ranks fifth among Chase's fastest-growing destination cities, despite tourism figures that led the government to launch a "stay away" campaign to discour-

age mass tourism.

Ms Rebecca Masri, founder of luxury travel app Little Emperors, has a solution for those dead set on returning to old favourites despite prices, weather and crowds: Go later.

After all, she says, the traditional European summer season no longer feels as if it ends in August.

As she puts it, "Our high season for places like Italy and Greece is now September." BLOOMBERG

Belmond's Eastern & Oriental Express debuts a fresh new face as it pampers guests taking a trip across the Causeway

Shamilee Vellu

JOHOR – I have travelled across the Singapore-Johor Causeway possibly 100 times in my life, but never like this.

The gridlock of cars and motorcycles inching Tetris-style across the bridge is mere metres from me, yet feels worlds away from the velvety comforts of my cabin on Belmond's Eastern & Oriental Express (E&O), which glides, unimpeded, alongside the Causeway towards Malaysia.

It is a fitting prelude to the care-free life passengers experience on the E&O, a happy abdication of responsibility that begins the moment my bags are swiftly whisked away upon arrival at Woodlands Train Checkpoint in Singapore.

Awaiting me is the sleek forest-green and cream E&O emblazoned with its signature gold prancing tiger motif, the train's gilded form a gleaming counterpoint to the station's utilitarian grey.

Stepping into the carriage, I am ushered into my elegant wood-panelled cabin moments before my smiling steward, Mr Jabez Loh, enters bearing a refreshing welcome drink of oolong tea-infused mangosteen juice topped with a ginger flower spike and a colourful confetti of petals.

As its whistle blows and the E&O eases out of the station, the intercom crackles to life and the train's announcer gives an overview of our trip, along with the exhortation that "the train lends itself to moments of glamour, and dressing up is encouraged".

After all, the train's splendid setting practically demands it. The E&O was relaunched in February after a four-year refresh with updated soft furnishings, a new chef and menu, and new activities for guests.

UPDATING A LEGEND

There is no disputing the E&O's iconic status, but the train is much younger than its nostalgic appearance suggests.

Built in 1971 in Japan for New Zealand's Silver Star sleeper train, its carriages plied the Auckland-Wellington route for 20 years before being shipped to Singapore, where they were completely transformed with exquisite new wood interiors inlaid with hand-cut marquetry.

The E&O started service in 1993, when it was the first train to take passengers between Singapore and Bangkok. The service lasted till 2020, when Covid-19 put on the brakes.

The restyled E&O is made up of 15 carriages, which includes eight sleeping cars, two restaurant cars, a Piano Bar car and its famed open-air observation car.

According to senior train manager Wolfgang Eipeldauer, the train is now shorter, with three carriages removed – reducing the maximum capacity of 84 passengers to 64 for a "more exclusive and comfortable" experience.

There are three cabin categories – 10 Pullman cabins (5.8 sq m), 20 State cabins (7.8 sq m) and two Presidential Suites (11.6 sq m) that include free-flow champagne, caviar upon arrival and 24-hour on-board service.

All cabins are air-conditioned, and unlike Belmond's grand train in Europe, the Venice Simplon-Orient-



The Eastern & Oriental Express relaunched in February after a four-year refresh, with updated interiors, a new chef and new activities. PHOTOS: LUDOVIC BALAY

Enjoy rail luxury to Malaysia

Express, all include en-suite bathrooms.

Cabins cost \$4,580++ a person for the two three-night seasonal journeys on offer – Essence of Malaysia (which travels to Langkawi) and Wild Malaysia, the journey I have signed up for.

Having travelled on the train pre-refresh, it is apparent how much the cabins have changed in look and feel.

The restyled cabins are inspired by the varied landscapes and cities they pass through – Kuala Lumpur's dramatic skies are reflected in the Pullman cabins' red and blue scheme, while the Presidential Suites reference the region's cultural opulence in golds and rich embroideries.

My State cabin is a tactile affair inspired by the jewel tones of coastal Penang. There is a plush navy banquette couch which converts into a bed, textured Malaychite-green

chairs and ottomans, and brocade pillows embroidered with coiling dragons reminiscent of those found in Penang's Chinese temples.

More delights await. Arranged neatly on my couch is an embossed green keepsake box containing Art Deco-styled, E&O-branded stationery, luggage tags and a brochure containing information on the train, along with a silky green scarf depicting a prowling Malayan tiger.

Tucked away are modern conveniences such as power points and bedside USB ports, along with refillable glass bottles of drinking water, which is treated on board. Other new eco-friendly initiatives include my bathroom's array of refillable toiletries from sustainable Malaysian skincare brand, Remedy.

And when Belmond realised it had bales of pink jacquard fabric left over from the Piano Bar car's previous design scheme, it engaged a social enterprise in Johor Bahru to stitch them into totes.

These are now presented to guests as a gift. "A little piece of the train's history you can take home," says Mr Eipeldauer.



Guests dine in two beautifully restored restaurant cars (left).

A SPICE-FILLED JOURNEY

Complementing the train's new look is its entirely revamped menu. It is curated by Michelin-starred Taiwanese chef Andre Chiang, the founder of Singapore's much-loved, now-defunct Restaurant Andre.

Luxury train cuisine presents a unique challenge for chefs, who must balance nostalgia, modernity and a sense of place.

Chef Chiang found his answer in spice.

"Spice is a navigator," he says, as we sit down to an elegant table-scene of fine china and glittering crystalware. "It tells you where you are."

He was schooled in spices when he arrived at Michelin-starred restaurant Le Jardin des Sens in France some 20 years ago, only to discover the gourmet qualities of Sarawak pepper for the first time.

He has now transmuted his considerably broader knowledge of aromatics into a varied menu that leans heavily into spices and, occasionally, spiciness.

It includes his 16-hour braised beef cheek, which contrasts the meat – so tender that I eat it with a spoon – with an assertive nine-pepper jus, made using five regional peppers including chef Chiang's beloved Sarawak pepper, long pepper and numbing Sichuan peppers.

His menu also embraces the oft-maligned "F" word – fusion – showing how delicious it is when done properly.

"You could be in the East, West or somewhere in between, and I wanted to recreate that sensation of constantly switching locations in my food as well," he says, referring to Belmond's trains, which traverse Asia, Europe and South America.

An example of this is the Laksa Bouillabaisse, a photogenic medley of prawns, scallops and mussels in a classic French rouille sauce, made with saffron, garlic and egg yolk, and amped up with local herbs and spices.

ON THE ROAD

WHEEL ADVENTURES

Planning a self-driving trip? Get tips on where to go and what to see with The Straits Times' On The Road series. Go to str.sg/travel



Created by chef Andre Chiang (right), the new menu includes Baby Vegetables with Alberguen (above) and Laksa Bouillabaisse (above right).



You could be in the East, West or somewhere in between, and I wanted to recreate that sensation of constantly switching locations in my food as well.

MICHELIN-STARRED TAIWANESE CHEF ANDRE CHIANG, on the food he created for the E&O

CONTINUED on C4

Gilded cars, gourmet meals

FROM C3

Another dish that successfully fuses East and West is chef Chiang's fragrant Black Bone Chicken Soup. Served with silky capellini pasta and the unexpected pinpricks of Sichuan green pepper and pickled green chilli, it tastes homely and elegant at the same time.

The mapo tofu appetiser, meanwhile, is a clear crowd favourite, with the soft, Sichuan-pepper-spiked tofu mix creatively encased in a crisp wafer.

In fact, almost every dish immediately elicits plenty of oohs and aahs, a feat all the more impressive considering each was prepared in a kitchen the size of an HDB bomb shelter while it trundles down the rails.

"Everything is cooked with real fire," declares the statuesque Chiang, who, like his food, emerges from the tiny kitchen mysteriously crease-free and preternaturally composed.

"What I'm trying to create is an experience that really melts into the environment," he says.

Gesturing at our gilded restaurant car and the view outside, he adds: "Time slows down on the E&O. I don't want my dishes to be so overly complicated that they take attention away from this."

NEW ROUTES AND EXPERIENCES

Constantly sated with fine food and wine, I am tempted to spend all my time draped across my cabin and the Piano Bar, the heart of the train which comes alive at sunset.

This is where, dressed in their evening best, guests gather for pre-dinner drinks that blur into convivial nightcaps – entertained with card tricks by the on-board magician one minute and lustily singing Beatles classics with an effervescent, fur-swaddled chanteuse and their 15 new best friends the next.

Best of all, bed is just metres away.

I return from my late-night revels to discover that Mr Loh has transformed my room into a cosy boudoir with an inviting swaddle of crisp sheets topped with a single chocolate.

A lifelong restless sleeper, I fall – with surprising swiftness – into a deep, restoring sleep broken only by the sun peeking through my blinds.

We have arrived in Pahang's Merapoh station and it is time for my first adventure.

I have chosen "The Spirit of the Tiger" excursion from an array of options, and find myself on the back of a pickup bumping down jungle dirt roads, the thrum of cicadas and gibbon song in the air. Arriving in Taman Negara National Park, I stroll through its treetop walk, where long-time guide Khairun Nizam Abdul Rashid regales my group with trivia on the spectacular creatures found here, from the shy, exquisitely colourful garnet pitta bird to the giant squirrel, which, at 80cm, is as long as an adult arm.

We learn that the forest is full of riches – like the soaring tualang trees topped with honeycombs that retail for up to RM500 (\$\$140)



The State cabins' new soft furnishings are inspired by the jewel tones of coastal Penang and sleep up to two guests. PHOTOS: LUDOVIC BALAY



While guests are at dinner, cabins are turned into cosy bedrooms (right). Breakfast is typically served in the cabin (above) and can include everything from croissants to mee soto.



Panoramic views from Eythrope House at the top of Penang Hill during a day trip.

for 2kg – but its most precious inhabitant is the Malayan Tiger, only 150 of which remain due to poaching and habitat loss.

To understand its plight, we meet local tiger conservationists from Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers, who share the mounting challenges faced by these magnificent felines, as well as photos taken from their camera traps – stunning, strangely affecting images of the park's wildlife, one of which shows the elusive big cat staring unblinkingly into the camera.

The next day, I disembark at Butterworth station and take a quick ferry to Penang, where I have signed up for a market visit and cooking class.

After a whistle-stop tour of the small but vibrant local market, we drive up Penang Hill to Eythrope House, a private residence and hotel that is not accessible to the public.

Offering stunning, panoramic views of Penang's coastline, its terraced gardens are filled with orchids and fragrant herbs like cilantro, Vietnamese mint and

pegaga (a medicinal plant), which we pick, shred and toss into local dishes like nasi ulam (Peranakan mixed herb rice) and pani puri, the popular Indian street snack of hollow dough balls filled with diced potato, onion and chickpeas.

I can linger here indefinitely, sipping from my flute of Umamu – Eythrope's sparkling wine from Australia – and gazing at those views, but the siren song of chilled towels and a lavish afternoon tea beckons.

On my final morning as we slowly head back to Singapore, I

am tempted to sleep in, but one of my travel companions persuades me to rise even earlier than usual to catch the sunrise.

There is a noticeable hush in the air as I shuffle in my robe and slippers to the darkened Observation Car, before an attentive staff member offers me a steaming cup of tea.

The day's oppressive heat has yet to descend, with the sun merely a rosy glow beyond the trees. Mist rises from the surrounding hills and villages, and I drink in the cool morning air while watching the rails slip away into the horizon,

overcome by a feeling of meditative peace.

My friend arrives and we sit together, watching the world slowly wake. There is no need for words.

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• The writer was hosted by Belmond.

• Shamilee Vellu is a travel and lifestyle journalist whose work appears worldwide in publications such as Conde Nast Traveller, Travel+Leisure and South China Morning Post.

6 podcasts about the joys and terrors of air travel

It is a nerve-racking time to be a frequent flier.

Boeing, the United States-headquartered once-proud aircraft manufacturer, has faced a cascading quality crisis since 2018, which escalated in 2024 after a door panel blew off one of its planes mid-flight, prompting multiple investigations by the US Federal Aviation Administration and a criminal inquiry from the Justice Department.

Also, a New York Times investigation last summer found that understaffing and overscheduling led to an alarming number of unreported near misses on US runways.

Despite this, air travel statistically remains the safest form of mass transit in the US, and it is worth keeping the risks in perspective.

Some of these podcasts do just that by exploring the true stories of air disasters (and why they are so rare), while others are love letters to life in the skies, hosted by proud aviation geeks who have travel tips, airport reviews and nostalgic industry history to share.

BLACK BOX DOWN

Billed as "a true crime podcast in the air", this series (str.sg/JUDQu) ended production last summer, but has a back catalogue of 150 episodes, each focussing on a different air disaster in meticulous detail.

Many of these calamities are well known, such as the story of US Airways 1549, which was landed safely on the Hudson River by Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger after a bird strike knocked out its engines.

But hosts Gustavo Sorola and Chris Demarais also cover plenty of less well-trodden ground, and have stories including hijackings and a detached propeller slicing through a plane's hull mid-flight.

While it would seem wise for anxious travellers to skip this show, Black Box Down is curiously reassuring because it highlights just how rare these kinds of accidents are and how many things have to go wrong for disaster to strike.

Starter episode: Crash of the Boeing 737 Max 8 (str.sg/a2v4)

THE NEXT TRIP

There is a satisfying sub-genre of podcasts that makes you feel as if you are eavesdropping on a conversation between friends at a bar, who also happen to be experts in their fields.

The Next Trip (str.sg/mxyV) is a prime example, hosted by self-professed aviation geeks (or "AvGeeks") Doug and Drew (they do not share their last names), who have worked for major carriers as a pilot and an operations manager, respectively.

Their amiable weekly conversations cover the latest aviation news – recent subjects have included the aborted JetBlue and Spirit merger.

Both hosts are also regular air travellers, and they share packing tips, review specific aircraft and airlines and reflect on how travel has changed throughout these recent years.

Starter episode: Aviation Bill (str.sg/fDQN)

DEEP DIVE: MH370

On March 8, 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 took off from Kuala Lumpur and disappeared from air control radar 35 minutes later, vanishing somewhere over the Indian Ocean.

In this meticulous investigative podcast (www.deepdivemh370.com), Jeff Wise, a journalist and aviation expert, breaks down every detail of the story alongside his co-host, Andy Tarnoff.

Over more than 25 episodes, they leave no stone unturned as they explore different theories, digging into satellite data, clues from the search effort and the backstory of the flight's pilot to piece together answers.

Starter episode: The First Vanishing (str.sg/JBUjv)

LAYOVERS

Spun off in 2015 from a blog of the same name, Layovers (www.layovers.to) is one of the longest-running aviation podcasts out there. Hosts Paul Papadimitriou and Alex Hunter both spend a lot of time in the air (and in airport lounges), and share a fascination with the commercial aviation industry.

In each episode, they talk about their latest travels, offer insights about different airline and aircraft experiences and review airports across the world.

Whether you are a fellow frequent flier or just want to live vicariously through their travels and rapport, it is a reliably fun listen.

Starter episode: The 747 is forever, a London NY bridge at JFK T8, Air France lounge joie de vivre, 777 guillotine, the airport game (str.sg/zxok)

BUSINESS WARS: BOEING VS AIRBUS

Every season of this Wondery podcast consists of several mini-seasons, each exploring the dynamics between two competing brands. Over the course of seven episodes, Boeing Vs Airbus (str.sg/F5ie) charts how Boeing became leader of the pack, beginning in the 1950s after a series of disasters involving its biggest competitor, British manufacturer de Havilland.

As Boeing continued to rise, European rivals banded together to create a worthy adversary in the form of Airbus, laying the groundwork for the duopoly that has existed ever since. Now that Boeing's recent string of incidents has laid

bare a culture of corner-cutting and lax safety protocols, the dynamics of that rivalry have shifted significantly in Airbus' favour, making this exhaustive history feel all the more vital.

Starter episode: Get Your Wings (str.sg/aZY2)

THE FLIGHT DECK

Produced by the Museum of Flight in Tukwila, Washington, and based in part around its collection,

The Flight Deck (str.sg/HUMd) is an invaluable resource for anyone feeling nostalgic or curious about air travel's past.

There are episodes exploring the gradual decimation of legroom on passenger flights, the chaotic origins of air traffic control and the story of the still-unidentified flight hijacker D.B. Cooper, plus wide-ranging interviews with pilots, astronauts, flight surgeons and more.

The podcast recently began producing shorter seasons with specific themes – its third season, which aired in 2023, spotlighted stories related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning issues in aviation history.

Starter episode: Rodeo in the Sky – Early Air Traffic Control (str.sg/zwCs) NYTIMES

The English-Norwegian DJ aims to release new song every month to stay relevant

Kenme Lam

Alan Walker is already a household name in the electronic dance music (EDM) scene. Yet, the hustle does not stop for the English-Norwegian DJ.

The 26-year-old tells The Straits Times in a Zoom interview ahead of his June 14 concert at Singapore Expo that he has to release music often to retain favour among listeners. And in 2024, he has challenged himself to deliver a new song every month.

So far, Walker has dropped four tracks this year – Who I Am in January, Team Side in March, and Unsure and Hide Away (Alan Walker Remix) in May.

He says: “Music consumption nowadays is so rapid, and there is always so much new music coming into the market that you almost have to randomly feed your own catalogue to stay relevant.”

The EDM sensation and producer shot to fame overnight with his biggest hit, Faded, in 2015. It topped the Shazam Worldwide Top 100 Popular Songs in February 2016 and, a month later, became the world’s most Shazamed song. It is also currently the 28th most-viewed video on YouTube with more than 3.6 billion views.

Since then, he has churned out four studio albums and 55 singles. His latest album, Walkerworld, was released in November 2023.

Besides constantly updating his discography, Walker has found other ways to connect with his fans.

In mid-May, he set up WhatsApp phone numbers for fans in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia to message him. Besides Singapore, his ongoing Walkerworld Asia Tour Pt.1 will make stops in Jakarta, Macau, Kuala Lumpur and 10 cities in India.

To date, he has received more than 20,000 messages from those in Singapore, and has responded to more than 500 of them. “I think it’s really cool, and South-east Asia is an important market with important fan bases,” he says.

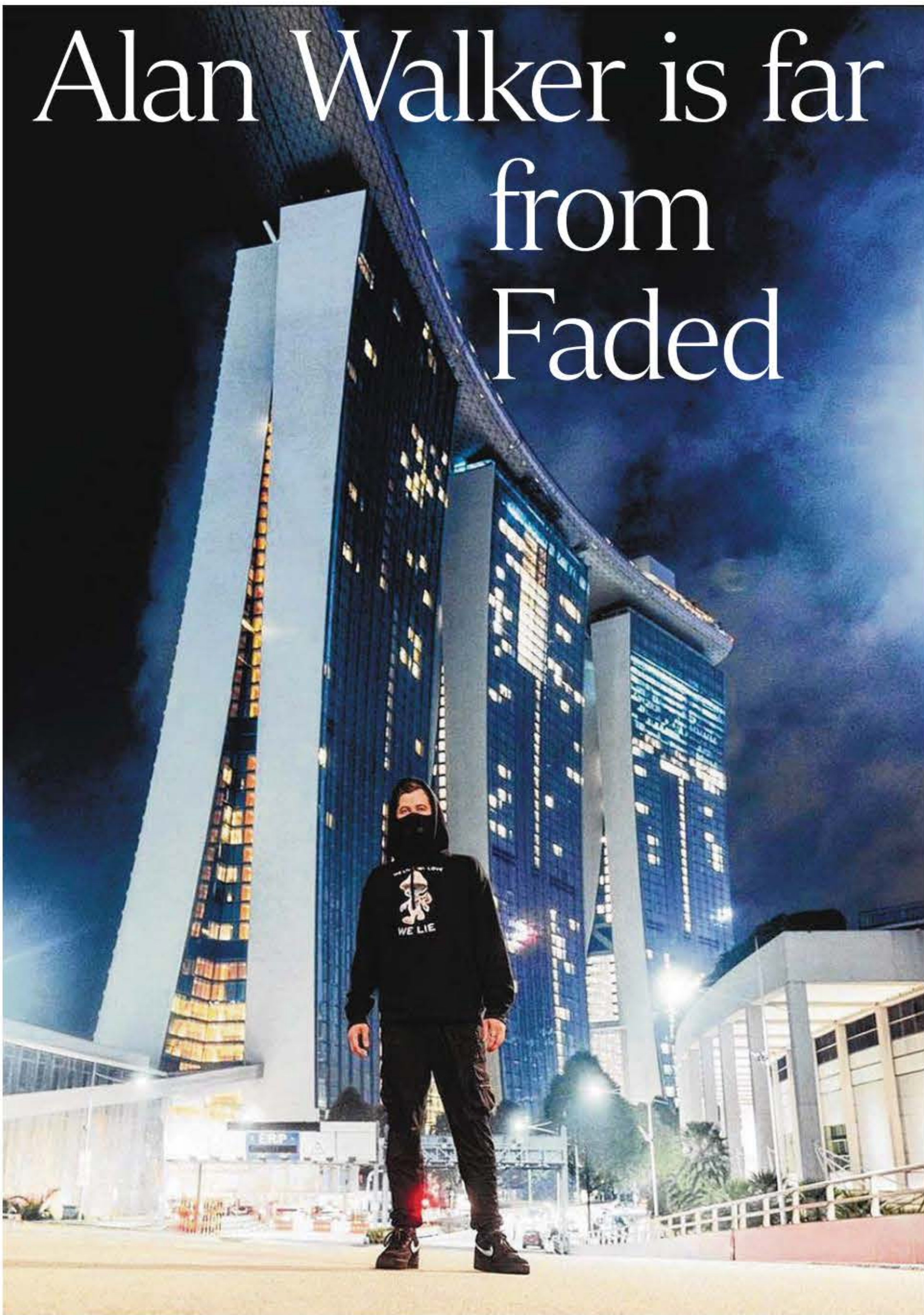
Although he has used other platforms to interact with listeners, such as creating a server on gaming-focused communications app Discord, they have not been specific to a particular region.

Walker recently took fan engagement to the next level. In a May 29 Instagram post, he described how he flew from New York to Medan, Indonesia, to meet a school teacher and his class of students whose covers of his songs went viral on Instagram a few months ago.

During the visit, Walker not only gifted the group with tickets to his Jakarta show on June 8, but also invited some of them to perform with him onstage.

Walker has often kept fans on their toes by springing surprises at his concerts. During his show in Chengdu in China in November 2023, he brought Chinese suona player Chuanzi onstage for a special performance of Walker’s song The Spectre (2017).

Similarly, Hong Kong boy band Mirror performed with Walker at



Alan Walker last performed in Singapore at Marquee in Marina Bay Sands in September 2023. PHOTO: ALANWALKERMUSIC/INSTAGRAM

his 2023 gig in Hong Kong, as part of his Walkerverse world tour.

To him, teaming up with local talents in the cities he plays at “adds deeper value for the people who come to the shows”.

Walker previously worked with Indonesian singer Putri Arian on his single, Who I Am (2024), as well as Lay from K-pop boy band Exo on a remix of Lay’s song Sheep (2018). Walker adds that his “arms are wide open” to potential collaborations with Singaporean artists.

After all, Singapore is also one of his “go-to places in the world”, he declares. He was last in town to perform at Marquee at Marina Bay Sands in September 2023.

“I love the architecture,” says Walker. “The vibe in Singapore is really cool. It’s very different for

me, coming from Norway.”

His Singapore concert will mostly feature songs from his latest album Walkerworld (2023). However, the set list will also include tracks from older albums such as Walkerverse Pt. I & II (2022) and World Of Walker (2021).

According to Walker, the Walkerworld Asia Tour Pt.1 tour is the biggest he has embarked on to date, capacity-wise. The Singapore Expo venue he will play at can accommodate up to 5,000 concertgoers.

“I think it’s really cool that I even have the opportunity to assemble so many people in one place and share the one thing we all love, which is music.”

kenme@sph.com.sg

ALAN WALKER – WALKERWORLD ASIA TOUR PT.1

WHERE Singapore Expo Halls 3 & 4A, 1 Expo Drive
WHEN June 14, 8pm
ADMISSION \$178 from Sistic (str.sg/4G65c)

Young international piano talents dazzle



Young pianists (from left) Cheng Sio loi, Phoebe Papandrea, Cai Rongzhe, Gao Jingzhi and Joseph Yourong Cai demonstrated technical ability as well as emotional nuance in their playing. PHOTO: ANTONIUS LAWRENCE

Chang Tou Liang

CONCERT
SEEDS OF HOPE: YOUNG INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN CONCERT
Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts
Lee Foundation Theatre/June 2

Ever wondered what it was like to witness Lang Lang and Yuja Wang performing as children way before they became global icons of classical music? The School of Young Talents at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts gave a glimpse of that in two concerts celebrating its 25th anniversary.

The first featured local students including violinist Chloe Chua, while the second highlighted five visiting piano talents, all winners of international competitions.

The youngest was seven-year-old Joseph Yourong Cai from Hong Kong, who opened accounts with the first movement from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Sonata In C Major (K. 330). Displaying hallmarks of good teaching, he gave a crisp and limpid reading which had rhythmic drive and poetry. The swift pace was upped for Franz Schubert’s vertiginous Impromptu In E Flat Major, whipped off effortlessly and balanced by a central section of true impetuosity.

A selection of Sergei Prokofiev’s Visions Fugitives, varied character pieces, revealed a wide range of moods and colours. He certainly understood the meaning of the 10th piece, described as ridiculosa-mente (ridiculously).

Two years older was Cheng Sio loi from Macau, so diminutive that he needed pedal extensions as both feet could not reach the floor. That he mastered the first eight of Frederic Chopin’s Preludes (Op. 28) was without question. More telling was his ability to infuse the minor key pieces (No. 2, 4 and 6) with a depth of feeling and gravitas that eludes even adults. His approach to Nikolai Kapustin’s Toccata was bold and brash, but showy in the best possible way.

Ten-year-old Gao Jingzhi from China was perhaps the first pianist to be self-aware of his virtuosity. Sporting a hairstyle similar to Lang Lang’s, he also exhibited some of his mannerisms without direct imitation. His view of Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s Meditation was somewhat prosaic, but unleashed prodigious fingers on two Chopin Etudes – No.7 and 8 from the Op. 10 set. These possessed pizzazz and humour to equal degree, as did the rapid-fire repeated notes of Moritz Moszkowski’s scintillating Caprice Espagnol.

When it came to the turn of 14-year-old Cai Rongzhe from China, one instinctively felt the presence of a mature performer. There was little to suggest in Chopin’s Third Impromptu that he was not yet of age to imbibe alcohol.

More impressive was his bracing account of Franz Liszt transcriptions of three Franz Schubert songs. In The Miller And The Brook, To Sing On The Water and The Trout, melodic lines were gloriously upheld over busy accompanying filigree. Maurice Ravel’s Scarbo from Gaspard De La Nuit then raised the roof and temperature of the hall.

At 17, Phoebe Papandrea from Britain is all ready for a professional performing career. Her varied repertoire choices and excellence of execution all point to that. Jean-Philippe Rameau’s Le Rappel Des Oiseaux (The Call Of The Birds) took buoyant flight, while violent contrasts in Chopin’s Second Ballade were capped by a furious coda. With Ravel’s Alborada Del Gracioso and Sergei Rachmaninov’s Sixth Musical Moment (Op. 16 No. 6), she completed an evening of fine music with the clacking of castanets and rolling thunder.

Calvin Klein names first female creative director, plans runway return

Calvin Klein, a brand that recently made waves with an advertisement campaign featuring American actor Jeremy Allen White in nothing but his underwear, is getting a little more buttoned up.

On May 30, it announced it would restart its high-end Collection business under new creative director Veronica Leoni, along with a return to the runway – and, perhaps, to its former position as a tentpole of New York Fashion Week.

Leoni will be the first named designer Calvin Klein has had in five years and the first woman to lead the American fashion house. She is one of the few women to be appointed to the top of the creative side of a major brand in the past year, when most of the big jobs have been given to white men.

Her appointment reflects the fact that jeans and influencers may not be enough to sustain a global name even in the era of social media – that an actual design point of view may be necessary.

It is also a sign of the upheaval in the fashion world, which has had a rash of designer appointments and reshuffling at brands such as Valentino, Alexander McQueen

and Moschino as the luxury business is increasingly challenged by the macro political and economic environment.

Calvin Klein reported 2023 revenues of US\$3.9 billion (S\$5.3 billion), a growth of only 3 per cent.

“We see this as an exciting opportunity to celebrate Calvin Klein’s return to its full expression as a fashion brand,” said Ms Eva Serrano, global brand president of Calvin Klein. “The market and the industry have changed, and the consumer is more eclectic. We wanted to respond to this cultural shift in a modern way.”

At Calvin Klein, Leoni, 41 and Italian, will be responsible for men’s and women’s apparel, underwear and accessories. Her top-line collection will inform the broader business and its presence on the red carpet where, aside from dressing American basketball player Brittney Griner and her wife, Cherelle Griner, for the 2023 Met Gala, it has been largely absent.

Just as it has been absent from the New York Fashion Week runway since 2018, when the last creative director, Raf Simons, was



For decades, Calvin Klein interpreted the bold idea of self-expression. I am willing to empower it.

VERONICA LEONI (left), the first named designer Calvin Klein has had in five years and the first woman to lead the American fashion house

PHOTO: COLLIER SCHORR

abruptly fired after less than two years.

Hired to jump-start Calvin Klein, which had never regained the aesthetic influence it had under its founder after its sale to American clothing company PVH in 2002, Simons infused the brand with an urgent, dystopian view of Americana that enthralled the fashion world but shocked the consumer base – and sent the Calvin Klein management team into a long period of retrenchment.

Though largely unknown outside the fashion world, Leoni brings a sensibility of twisted romantic minimalism born of stints at Jil Sander, Celine under Phoebe Philo and The Row.

In 2020, she started her own label, Quira, which was named after her grandmother and made her a finalist for the 2023 LVMH prize, the most lucrative young designer prize in fashion. It also made her a name often whispered when a job opening arose.

Her most recent collection, shown during Paris Fashion Week in March, featured a cast of different characters in carefully calibrated oversized tailoring punctuated with

the occasional draped chiffon gown. Leoni will continue to design Quira and will split her time between Rome and New York.

“For decades, Calvin Klein interpreted the bold idea of self-expression,” Leoni said in a statement. “I am willing to empower it.”

What exactly that means will be unveiled when her first collection for autumn is shown in early 2025. It will be one of the most anticipated debuts of New York Fashion Week, which has lost many of its once storied brands, leaving it ripe for a defining new figure.

Ralph Lauren now shows mostly off schedule; Oscar de la Renta no longer shows at all. Thom Browne splits his time between New York and Paris; and Donna Karan has been sold off and reinvented as a contemporary line.

Leoni’s appointment is not the end of the designer reshuffle.

In Paris, the top job at Givenchy remains open, and rumours are strong that Hedi Slimane is planning to leave his post at Celine. The game of fashion musical chairs – which in part determines what people want to wear next, which in turn crystallises a decade – is just heating up. NYTIMES

Media mogul Rupert Murdoch, 93, marries for the fifth time

LOS ANGELES – Media magnate Rupert Murdoch (far right) has married for the fifth time at age 93, tying the knot with a retired molecular biologist a quarter-century younger than him.

Mr Murdoch and Ms Elena Zhukova, 67, were wedded on June 1 at the media mogul's California vine-

yard and estate, called Moraga.

Photographs published in The Sun, the British tabloid owned by Mr Murdoch, show the couple posing and smiling – he in a black suit and yellow tie and she in an off-the-shoulder white gown as she clutched a bouquet of lilies of the valley.

Jet-set guests at the nuptials included Mr Robert Kraft, 82, owner of the New England Patriots US football team, and his wife Dana Blumberg, 50, news reports said.

Mr Murdoch had previously been married four times, most recently to American model Jerry Hall, the long-time partner of Rolling

Stones frontman Mick Jagger.

His roller-coaster personal life is often fodder for the tabloid newspaper industry that he helped foster on three continents.

In 2023, Mr Murdoch announced his engagement to American dental hygienist-turned-conservative radio host Ann Lesley Smith,

but called off the planned nuptials less than a month later.

Ms Zhukova emigrated to the United States from Russia. Her daughter, Ms Dasha Zhukova, an arts patron and entrepreneur, was formerly married to the Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich.

Mr Murdoch, who has six

children, was first married to Ms Patricia Booker, an Australian flight attendant, whom he divorced in the late 1960s.

He and his second wife, Ms Anna Torv, a Scottish newspaper reporter, were together more than 30 years before divorcing in 1999.

His third marriage to American entrepreneur Wendi Deng ended in 2013.

The Australia-born Murdoch, whose media empire includes The Wall Street Journal, Fox News and other influential outlets, and his family have a net worth of about US\$20 billion (S\$27 billion), according to Forbes.

Mr Murdoch handed over control of his global media empire to son Lachlan in November 2023, shifting to an emeritus status. AFP



On social media

RECLUSIVE XIE SHAOGUANG IS NOW ON INSTAGRAM: Former Mediacorp actor Xie Shaoguang opened an Instagram account on June 2 and has already garnered more than 1,700 followers.

His first post was a reel of himself with Ms Ivy Low (right), the chief of Mediacorp's talent management arm The Celebrity Agency. It was captioned: "A reunion with an old friend that feels like yesterday."

Many local celebrities – including actors Desmond Tan, Cynthia Koh, Ayden Sng, Chantelle Ng, Bryan Wong, Xiang Yun, Lin Meijiao, Priscelia Chan and Zhang Zetong – posted their greetings in the comment section of Xie's post.

The public social media account came as a surprise as the 62-year-old is known for being reclusive.

Xie made his debut on local television in 1989 and was regarded as one of Singapore's best actors.

He was the male lead in many top-rated dramas in the 1990s, such as The Legends Of Ji Gong (1997), where he played the titular monk. He also played a paraplegic doctor in the critically acclaimed Stand By Me (1998).

The five-time Best Actor winner at the Star Awards retired from show business in 2005 and relocated to Malaysia.

At one time, he was an ordained Buddhist monk. He also opened an animal shelter and later became a chef in a vegetarian restaurant.

His last public sighting was at a gathering in September 2023, where more than 70 local veteran actors and backstage crew members reunited to celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival.

It is unclear whether Xie has moved back to Singapore.



PHOTO: XIE_SHAO_GUANG/INSTAGRAM

Chick-fil-A pop-up event sold out in 90 minutes

Ian Cheng
Correspondent

All slots for American fast-food restaurant Chick-fil-A's pop-up event in late June are sold out.

The event will take place at Esplanade Mall from June 26 to 28, from 11am to 2pm and 3 to 7pm. This marks the first time the popular chain will set foot in Asia.

Pre-registration for the pop-up opened on June 3 at noon. Organisers told The Straits Times that all 600 tickets were snapped up by 1.27pm.

When asked if they would look into increasing the availability of slots following the initial success, they said: "We are working hard to see how we can cater to more guests and look forward to sharing more updates soon."

Chick-fil-A told ST it looks forward to expanding in Europe and Asia in the near future, with plans to open restaurants in additional international markets by 2030. "We are heartened by the overwhelming response," said a spokesperson for the brand. "Through the pop-up, we hope to gain a nuanced understanding of consumer preferences in this region."

The pop-up is held in partnership with local philanthropic organisation Community Chest (ComChest).

Those who reserved seats had to make a \$10 donation to ComChest to get a ticket, which entitles them to a meal comprising an Original Chick-fil-A Chicken Sandwich, Waffle Potato Fries and a drink.

Every dollar donated will be matched by Chick-fil-A, up to a limit of \$50,000. All proceeds collected will go to ComChest.

Organisers said that \$12,000 was raised on June 3 for ComChest.

The Original Chick-fil-A Chicken Sandwich was developed 60 years ago by founder S. Truett Cathy. The breaded, boneless chicken breast is pressure-cooked in peanut oil and served on a toasted, buttery bun with two dill pickle chips.

The Chick-fil-A event comes on the heels of another successful pop-up held by US cult burger chain In-N-Out Burger on May 31.

That event at Columbus Coffee Company in Upper Thomson saw queues forming hours before it began at 9am. By 10am, all 500 wristbands – one for each burger entitlement – had been given out.

BTS' Jin to give free hugs to fans after discharge from military

SEOUL – BTS' Jin will be giving out free hugs upon his discharge from the South Korean military.

The South Korean singer, whose full name is Kim Seok-jin, will complete his military duty on June 12. The oldest member of the K-pop boy band has announced that his first post-military discharge event will be an in-person gathering with fans.

All BTS members – including J-Hope, Suga, RM, V, Jimin and Jungkook – are serving in the South Korean military.

According to BTS' label BigHit Music, Jin will attend the 2024 Festa at Seoul's Jamsil Sports Complex on June 13, which also marks the 11th anniversary of BTS' debut.

The 31-year-old star will offer hugs to 1,000 fans, and the second half of the event will feature segments showcasing different sides of Jin, said BigHit on June 2.

For fans who cannot visit the venue, the second part of the event will be live-streamed to Army, BTS' fandom, on South Korean fan community platform Weverse.

In addition to the physical gathering on June 13, several events, such as the streaming of previous concerts and messages from the seven BTS members, are planned for the two-week festival, according to the 2024 Festa poster that



BigHit unveiled on X.

Jin, the first BTS member to enlist, joined the South Korean military in December 2022 and has been serving as an assistant instructor at a front-line infantry division boot camp in Yeoncheon, Gyeonggi Province.

Meanwhile, Jungkook will be releasing his new single Never Let Go on June 7 through Weverse and BTS' official social media channels. The track is dedicated to Army, with a message to "never let go of each other", said BigHit.

It is the 26-year-old's first solo music since the release of his 2023 debut album Golden, which debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 album chart. THE KOREA HERALD/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Jin (right) of BTS will be discharged from South Korean military on June 12. PHOTO: JIN/INSTAGRAM

Upcoming concerts



Taiwanese rock band Mayday, consisting of (from far left) guitarist Stone, drummer Guan Yu, lead vocalist Ashin, bassist Masa and guitarist Monster during a concert in Kaohsiung in March 2024. PHOTO: MAYDAY/FACEBOOK

Mayday's National Stadium gig in January 2025

Benson Ang
Lifestyle Correspondent

As promised, Mayday will be back for two concerts at the National Stadium in 2025, on Jan 11 and 12.

The Taiwanese rock band last performed two shows at the same venue in January 2024, as part of their Nowhere Re: Live 2024 Singapore tour.

Lead vocalist Ashin revealed on stage then that when the group were given the chance to stage their Nowhere or 25th anniversary #5525 Live Tour show in Singapore, they picked the former so they would have another reason to return.

He added: "The next time we come here, we will be celebrating a new birthday."

The #5525 Live Tour commemo-

rates the quintet's 25 years in show business, marked by their debut album, Mayday's First Album (1999). The band comprise Ashin, bassist Masa, drummer Guan Yu and guitarists Stone and Monster.

Mayday's tour kicked off on Dec 31, 2023, in Taichung and has travelled to Kaohsiung, Hong Kong and Beijing so far.

The set list includes hits such as OAOA (2011), Sun Wu Kong (2004) and Song Of Battle (2013).

The tour has also featured several guest stars, such as Taiwanese singer Cheer Chen in Beijing, Chinese singer Della Ding Dang in Taichung and Taiwanese boy band Energy in both Hong Kong and Beijing.

Ticketing details to the upcoming Singapore gigs have not been released.

November date for Radiohead singer Thom Yorke's show

Eddino Abdul Hadi
Music Correspondent

British singer-songwriter Thom Yorke, best known as the frontman of alternative rock band Radiohead, is set to play a solo show for the first time in Singapore at The Star Theatre on Nov 5.

The 55-year-old will be performing songs from his long career dating back to the early 1990s.

He wrote on his social media platforms that he will be "alone on stage trying a new kind of solo show thing playing versions of songs from my recent and not so recent past".

The tour includes stops in Australia, Japan and New Zealand. Fan club pre-sales start on June 5, while general ticket sales start on June 6. Sign up for Radiohead fan club w.a.s.t.e at str.sg/3ABJg. Tickets are priced from \$98 to \$248.

Yorke has released nine albums with Radiohead, including their 1993 debut Pablo Honey and their most recent release, A Moon Shaped Pool, in 2016.

He has released three solo albums: The Eraser (2006), Tomorrow's Modern Boxes (2014) and Anima (2019).

In 2013, he released an album, Amok, with Atoms For Peace, an alternative rock band that also



To be staged at The Star Theatre, the concert will be British singer and songwriter Thom Yorke's first solo show in Singapore. PHOTO: MICHAEL AVEDON

THOM YORKE: SOLO

WHERE The Star Theatre, 04-01 The Star Performing Arts Centre, 1 Vista Exchange

WHEN Nov 5, 8pm

ADMISSION Tickets from \$98 to \$248 via Ticketmaster (go to ticketmaster.sg or call 3158-8588). Fan club pre-sales start on June 5, 10am. General sales start on June 6, 10am

boardist Jonny Greenwood.

Yorke has worked on several film soundtracks, including the horror film Suspiria (2018) and Italian drama Confidenza (2024).

He has also collaborated on songs by various artists, including British singer-songwriter PJ Harvey and Icelandic icon Bjork.

Pop act Take That return in October

British pop act Take That will be back in Singapore to perform at The Star Theatre on Oct 28.

Best known for hits from the 1990s such as Pray (1993), Back For Good (1995) and How Deep Is Your Love (1996), the boy band now perform as a trio comprising founding members Gary Barlow, 53, Howard Donald, 56, and Mark Owen, 52.

LAMC and British Chamber of Commerce pre-sales start on June 5 at 10am. General tickets go on sale via Sistic (www.sistic.com.sg) on June 7 at 10am. Ticket prices and other details have not been released.

Take That's current This Life On



Tour is named after This Life, their ninth album released in late 2023. The record went to No. 1 in Britain,

Scotland and Ireland. The tour includes dates in Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan, Europe and Australia.

The group last performed in Singapore in 2016 at Sentosa, a show that was part of golf event HSBC Women's Champions.

They played their first show here at the Singapore Indoor Stadium in 1995.

Take That formed in 1990 as a quintet that also included former members Robbie Williams, 50, and Jason Orange, 53. They went on to become one of Britain's most successful boy bands, with all nine albums hitting No. 1 in the UK charts.

They split up in 1996 and reformed in 2005 as a quartet with Barlow, Donald, Orange and Owen. Williams briefly reunited with the group in 2010. Both he and Orange left the group in 2014.

Eddino Abdul Hadi

FREE TO AIR

CHANNEL 5	
AM	6.00 Slugterra (PG) (C) 6.30 Johnny Test (C) 7.00 Art Factory (C) 7.30 Tayo Singalong Show (P) 8.00 The Rainbow Bus (P) 8.30 Pinkfong Songs & Stories (P) 9.00 Sesame Street (P) 9.30 Thomas & Friends (P) 10.00 Ollie And Friends (C) 10.30 Super Wings: World Guardians (C) 11.00 Art Factory (C) 11.30 Gigantosaurus (P)
PM	12.00 Slugterra (PG) (C) 12.30 Johnny Test (C) 1.00 Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Monsters (C) 1.30 Power Rangers Dino Fury (PG) (C) 2.00 Denver The Last Dinosaur (C) 2.30 Why Not? (PG) (C) 3.00 Wheel Of Fortune 40 (V) 3.30 Sunny Side Up (PG) (CC) (D) 4.00 Tanglin (PG) (CC) (D) 4.30 Clean It, Fix It 3 (IE) 5.30 The Chefs' Line 2 (PG) (IE) 6.00 America's Got Talent 17 (PG) (V) 7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 40 (V) 7.30 MasterChef Australia Dessert Masters (PG) (V) 8.30 Sunny Side Up (PG) (CC) (D) 9.00 News Tonight (News) 9.30 Makan Kakis: Heritage Food Edition (Cul) 10.00 Faith In Humanity Restored (PG13) (Shorts) 10.20 So Help Me Todd (PG) (CC) (D) 11.00 Cobra: Rebellion 3 (PG13) (D)
AM	12.00 Sunny Side Up (PG) (CC) (D) 12.30 FBI 4 (PG13) (CC) (D) 1.30 America's Got Talent 17 (PG) (V) 2.30 MasterChef Australia Dessert Masters (PG) (V) 3.30 Arts 21 (PG) (Cul) 4.00 Wheel Of Fortune 40 (V) 4.30 The Chefs' Line 2 (PG) (IE) 5.00 Clean It, Fix It 3 (IE)

CHANNEL 8	
AM	6.00 Ah Gong Can Cook (CC) (V) 7.00 News Tonight (News) 7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (CA) 8.00 The Queen Of News (PG) (CC) (D) 9.00 Morning Express (News) 9.30 A Perfect Man (PG) (CC) (D) 10.00 The Wonder Shop (Infomercial) 10.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
PM	12.30 The Wonder Shop (Infomercial) 1.00 News 8 At One (News) 1.30 Come Home Love: Lo And Behold (PG) (D) 3.00 The Wonder Shop (Infomercial) 3.30 Lost Track Of Time (PG) (D) 4.30 The Way To Happiness (PG) (D) 5.30 Till The End (PG) (CC) (D) 6.30 Hello Singapore (CA) 7.30 A Perfect Man (PG) (CC) (D) 8.00 Double J Baecation (CC) (V) 8.30 Borneo Culinary Adventures – Sarawak (PG) (CC) (IE) 9.00 The Queen Of News (PG) (CC) (D) 10.00 News Tonight (News) 10.30 Secrets Of Wellness (CC) (IE) 11.00 Mysterious Lotus Casebook (PG13) (D)
AM	12.00 Used Good (PG13) (D) 1.00 James' Going Places 3 (V) 2.00 Holland V (PG) (D) 4.00 The Way To Happiness (PG) (D) 5.00 Moon Fairy (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U	
PM	3.00 Just Eat 2 (IE) 4.00 Cooking For A Cause (CC) (IE) 5.00 Never Twice (PG) (CC) (D) 6.00 My Lovely Bodyguard (PG) (CC) (D) 7.00 Home For Summer (PG) (CC) (D) 9.00 The River Of Adventure (CC) (IE) 10.00 Love On A Shoestring (PG13) (CC) (D) 11.00 News Tonight (News) 11.30 The River Of Adventure (CC) (IE)

AM	12.30 Home For Summer (PG) (CC) (D) 2.30 Close
CNA	
AM	6.00 Singapore Tonight/7.00 Asia First 10.00 When Titans Clash: The Overcapacity Debate 11.00 Asia Now
PM	1.00 Becoming Human: A1's Next Evolution 2.00 Asia Now/4.00 3D Nation 4.30 CNA Correspondent 5.02 Race To Feed The World 6.00 East Asia Tonight 7.00 Becoming Human: A1's Next Evolution/8.00 Asia Tonight 9.00 Our Lives According To Buses 10.00 Singapore Tonight 11.00 India Votes 2024
AM	12.02 East Asia Tonight 1.00 Becoming Human: A1's Next Evolution 2.00 Singapore Tonight 3.00 Race To Feed The World 4.00 Asia Tonight 5.00 Our Lives According To Buses
VASANTHAM	
AM	9.00 Super Samayal 2 (IE) 9.30 Manmadha Bullets (PG) (CC) (D) 10.00 Ungalukku Theriyumma (CC) (IE) 10.30 Veerasingam (PG) (CC) (D) 11.00 Galatta Samayal (CC) (IE)
PM	12.00 Cocktail (PG) (M) 3.00 Nerukku Naer 2 (PG) (CC) (IE) 7.25 Vaaitha (PG) (CC) (M) 6.30 Ninaivil Nindravai (V) 7.00 Anjaraipetti 9 (PG) (CC) (IE) 8.00 Manmadha Bullets (PG) (CC) (D) 8.30 Tamil Seithi (News) 9.00 Veerasingam (PG) (CC) (D) 9.30 Oru Naal Koothu (CC) (V)

10.00 Kaavalan (PG) (CC) (D) 10.30 Vanjam (PG) (CC) (D) 11.00 Ungalukkaga Paadalgal (V) 11.30 Tamil Seithi (News)	AM 12.00 Close
SURIYA	
AM	9.00 The Smurfs (C) 9.30 Siapa Master? 2 (CC) (IE) 10.00 Ayah Kat Rumah (PG) (D) 11.00 Jangan Menangis Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
PM	12.00 Melur Untuk Firdaus 2 (PG) (CC) (D) 1.00 Hasrat Tersirat (PG) (CC) (D) 2.00 Aku Titipkan Cinta (PG) (CC) (D) 3.00 Cuti Sini (CC) (IE) 4.00 Jangan Menangis Cinta (PG) (CC) (D) 5.00 Bukan Syurga Pilihan (PG) (CC) (D) 6.00 Stor Atuk 2 (CC) (C) 6.30 Siapa Master? 2 (CC) (IE) 7.00 Akira Khan (PG) (CC) (D) 8.00 Berita (News) 8.30 Mua Star (PG) (CC) (V) 9.30 Bukan Syurga Pilihan (PG) (CC) (D) 10.30 Andai Itu Takdirnya (PG) (CC) (D) 11.30 Berita (News)
AM	12.00 Close
C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Pre-school; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety	
Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg. For streaming updates, go to flixxpatrol.com/top10/netflix/singapore or www.viu.com/ott/sg.	

RADIO

KISS92	
AM	6.00 The BIG Show With Glenn, Angel And The Flying Dutchman 10.00 Kiss Cafe With Charmaine Phua
PM	1.00 Eavesdropping With Daphne Khoo 4.00 On Your Way With Joshua Simon 8.00 The Owls With Nat Koh
ONE FM 91.3	
AM	6.00 The Brightside With Carol, Lavinia & Shehzad 10.00 The Music Mansion With Shan Wee
PM	1.00 The Sweet Escape With Carrie Chong 4.00 The ONE Way Home With Tim Oh 8.00 Nights With Simon Lim
MONEY FM 89.3	
AM	6.00 Breakfast With Ryan Huang, Emaad Akhtar & Audrey Siek 9.00 Your Money With Michelle Martin
PM	12.00 On The Show With Jill Lim 1.00 The Afternoon Update With Lynlee Foo 4.00 The Evening Runway With Hongbin Jeong, Roshan Gidwani & Chua Tian Tian
UFM100.3	
AM	6.00 Zao Ban GaoGao With Limei, Weilong & Chengyao 10.00 Lively Life With Kemini
PM	1.00 Tea With Yuling 4.00 La La La 4-8 With Wenhong & Andrew 8.00 Singing With The Stars With Xinying
96.3 HAO FM	
AM	6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jingyun, Deming And Jieqi 10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM	1.00 Best Of 80s And 90s 4.00 Evening Drive Time With Liji And Guoxian 8.00 Night Time With 963



Showing on Netflix, Crew stars Tabu, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Kriti Sanon. PHOTO: NETFLIX_IN/INSTAGRAM

CABLE TV

STARHUB TV HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)	
AM	6.00 You Are My Glory 7.00 Bad And Crazy 8.30 The Way To Happiness 9.30 Hello, Saturday 11.30 Hot Door Night 26
PM	12.30 Ratman To The Rescue 1.30 Bad And Crazy 3.00 iWalker/4.00 China: Your Home Away 5.00 Ratman To The Rescue 6.00 The Way To Happiness 7.00 Hot Door Night 26 8.00 Ride The Wind 2024 10.00 Ordinary Greatness 11.00 Hot Door Night 26
BBC EARTH (CHANNEL 407)	
AM	6.00 Food Factory 3 6.30 Blue Planet 2 7.30 South Korea With Alexander Armstrong 8.20 Food Factory 5 9.15 Blue Planet 2 10.10 Engineering Reborn 11.00 Cheetah Family & Me
PM	12.00 South Korea With Alexander Armstrong 12.50 Food Factory 5 1.45 Blue Planet 2 2.40 Engineering Reborn 3.30 Cheetah Family & Me 4.30 Food Factory 5 5.25 Blue Planet 2 6.20 Engineering Reborn 7.10 Food Factory 6 8.05 Eden: Untamed Planet 9.00 Martin Clunes: Islands Of The Pacific 2/9.55 Australia's Sleep Revolution With Michael Mosley 10.55 Running Wild With Bear Grylls 4 11.45 Eden: Untamed Planet
BBC LIFESTYLE (CHANNEL 432)	
AM	6.00 MasterChef: The Professionals 14 7.00 Junior Bake Off 8 7.50 Nigella's Cook, Eat, Repeat 8.25 Your Home, Made Perfect 3 9.25 Rachel Khoo's Chocolat 10.15 MasterChef: The Professionals 14 11.15 Nigella's Cook, Eat, Repeat 11.50 Junior Bake Off 8
PM	12.45 Your Home, Made Perfect 3

1.45 Nigella's Cook, Eat, Repeat 2.20 Rachel Khoo's Chocolat 3.15 Junior Bake Off 8 4.10 Your Home, Made Perfect 3 5.10 Rachel Khoo's Chocolat 6.00 MasterChef: The Professionals 14 7.00 Gino's Italy: Secrets Of The South 7.25 Jamie Oliver: Cooking For Less 8.20 Junior Bake Off 8 9.15 Grand Designs 20 10.10 Jamie Oliver: Cooking For Less 11.05 Gino's Italy: Secrets Of The South 11.35 Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond The Lobby 5	HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)
AM	6.00 Tennis: Hologic WTA All Access 2024 6.30 Snooker: Cazoo World Snooker Championship 2024: Round 2-19 (Joe O'Connor Vs Kyren Wilson) 8.30 Basketball: NBA Playoffs 2024: WCFG7: Dallas Mavericks Vs Minnesota Timberwolves 11.00 Magazine Show: Mass Participation 2024: Trail Menorca 11.30 Snooker: Cazoo World Snooker Championship 2024: Round 2-19* (Joe O'Connor Vs Kyren Wilson)
PM	1.00 Snooker: Cazoo World Snooker Championship 2024: Round 2-20 (John Higgins Vs Mark Allen) 5.00 Snooker: Cazoo World Snooker Championship 2024: Round 2-20* (John Higgins Vs Mark Allen) 7.00 Magazine Show: Wanda Diamond League 2024 Highlights: Stockholm (Sweden) 8.00 Magazine Show: Foul Play 8.30 Other Sports: ASO Marathon Programming 2024: Zuruch Marato Barcelona 9.00 Other Sports: Wanda Diamond League 2024: Xiamen (China) 11.00 Magazine Show: Wanda Diamond League 2024 Highlights: Xiamen (China)
AM	12.00 Tennis: Billie Jean King Cup Qualifiers By Gainbridge 2024: France Vs Great Britain Day 1 3.00 Magazine Show: Mass Participation 2024: Le Marathon Des Sables 3.30 Motor Racing: FIA World Cup For Cross-Country Bajas 2024: Saudi Baja Hail 4.00 Other Sports: UCI Cycling World Championships 2024: BMX Racing World Championships Highlights 5.00 Snooker: Cazoo World Snooker Championship 2024: Round 2-21 (Judd Trump Vs Tom Ford)

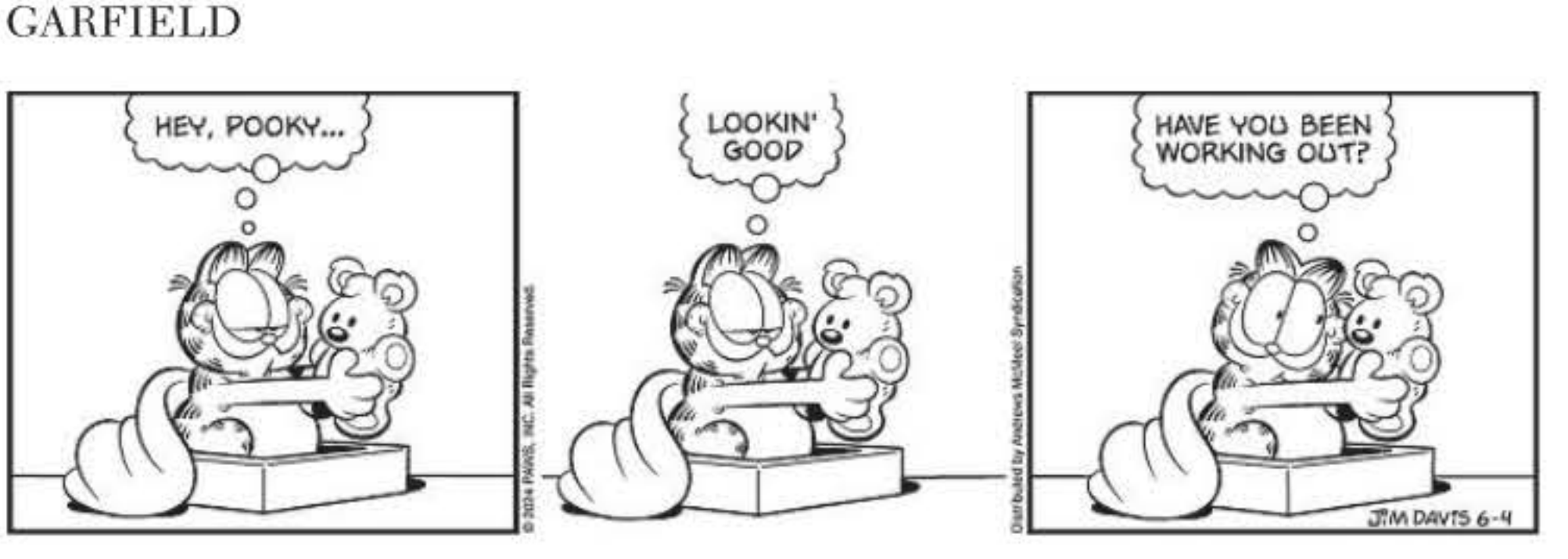
SINGTEL TV CARTOON NETWORK (HD) (CHANNEL 226)	
AM	6.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings 7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show 7.25 Tom And Jerry 7.30 Tom And Jerry – The Movie 9.00 Teen Titans Go! 9.35 Looney Tunes Cartoons 10.00 Mr Bean: The Animated Series 10.30 We Bare Bears 11.00 Craig Of The Creek 11.35 Unikitty
PM	12.00 Mechamato 12.30 Clarence 1.00 Teen Titans Go! 1.35 Lamput 2.00 The Tom And Jerry Show 2.25 Tom And Jerry 2.30 Tom And Jerry – The Movie 4.00 Looney Tunes Cartoons 4.30 Lamput 5.00 Teen Titans Go! 5.35 We Bare Bears 6.00 Craig Of The Creek 6.35 Unikitty 7.00 Mechamato 7.30 Clarence 8.00 Teen Titans Go! 8.35 Mr Bean: The Animated Series 9.00 Lego Dreamzzz 9.25 Chowder 10.00 Steven Universe 11.00 Regular Show

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)	
AM	6.00 CSI: Vegas 2 6.50 Blue Bloods 14 7.35 Rookie Blue 5 8.25 CSI: Miami 8 9.15 American Ninja Warrior 13 10.10 Blue Bloods 14 11.00 The Blacklist 10 11.50 Rookie Blue 5
PM	12.45 American Ninja Warrior 13 1.40 CSI: Miami 8 2.30 The Blacklist 10 3.20 Rookie Blue 5 4.15 Blue Bloods 14 5.10 American Ninja Warrior 13 6.05 FBI: Most Wanted 5 7.00 CSI: Vegas 2 7.55 The Blacklist 10 8.50 Rookie Blue 5 9.45 FBI 6 10.40 Unforgettable 3 11.35 FBI 6
E-LE (HD) (CHANNEL 501)	
AM	6.00 My Superhero 7.00 Sword And Fairy 8.00 Enemies From The Past 9.30 Come Home Love: Lo And Behold 10.00 My Superhero 11.00 A Dream Of Splendor
PM	12.00 Three-Body 1.00 Bright Eyes In The Dark 2.00 Dream Home 9 4.00 The Secret House 5.30 Sword And Fairy 6.30 Come Home Love: Lo And Behold 7.00 A Dream Of Splendor 8.00 Sword And Fairy 8.50 The Secret House 10.10 Bright Eyes In The Dark 11.00 Three-Body

STREAMING

NETFLIX	
TOP 10 MOVIES	1. Atlas 2. Godzilla Minus One 3. Colors Of Evil: Red 4. Crew 5. Mama 6. To Catch a Killer 7. Agak Laen 8. The Eagle 9. Bionic 10. Night Of Hell
TOP 10 TV SHOWS	1. Dancing For The Devil: The 7M TikTok Cult 2. Demon Slayer: Kimetsu No Yaiba 3. Eric 4. Korean Fried Chicken Rhapsody 5. The 8 Show 6. The Atypical Family 7. Geek Girl 8. Bridgerton 9. That Time I Got Reincarnated As A Slime 10. Kaiju No. 8
VIU	
1. Lovely Runner 2. Joy Of Life 2 3. Missing Crown Prince 4. Suji & Uri 5. Beauty And Mr Romantic 6. The Legend Of Shen Li 7. The Midnight Romance In Hagwon 8. The Two Sisters 9. What's Wrong With Secretary Kim? 10. The Escape Of The Seven: Resurrection	

COMICS



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ACTIVE GOLF 96369950 SICC \$330k, TMCC \$215k, Sentosa \$500k, Laguna \$145k, Seletar \$70k, OCC/Warren \$22k Keppel \$11k, SRC, American

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QUALIFIED ELECT Contractor Experienced Licenced Electrician 96391853 (7/081426)

Gardening/Landscaping

ALWAYS CALL SAM 92382931 Grass/ Tree cutting & turfing & transport. Free quotation.

Announcements

Found

A Grey white, male, Shih Tzu dog at Bishan Park. Owner call SPCA 6287 5355.

Interior Design/Renovation

SEEPAGE PROFESSIONAL REPAIR leaks from ceiling, wall, toilet. No hacking.9328 5959

Home Furnishings/Fittings

LUCKY ALUMINIUM WORKS Factory price window & grille \$180 TL Dr 90698871 Henry

AUTO GATE/ AWNING/ Railing HDB Gate/ Aluminium Work/ Toilet Door. 94593613 Tan

Pest Control

ASIA PEST EXTERMINATOR. Specialist Since 1973. No GST Tel: 6841 2023 / 8339 2514

Plumbing

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Domestic Help Available

**LOCALS/MYANMAR HOURLY HELPER. Well trained, legal, diligent, insured. 81013292

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Business Opportunities-General

OFFICE/HOME KEY PHONE SYSTEM Fr. \$1288 Incl. Installation TEL: 64822879

Stalls for Rent/Sale

STALL FOR RENT @ Bt Merah/ Tai Seng. Suits Western, noodle, Indian, Others 92295237

BMW For Sale

REPOSSESSED 09/2010 SMW1705T B.M.W. 523i 2.5 AT Highest Call 64663808

Volkswagen For Sale

AUCTION SALE CLOSING 6Jun 2024. Volkswagen Scirocco 1.4L AT TSI 137205 (COE expiry Feb 2030). Sold on 'As is where is' cond. T&Cs Apply. Call 64532121 / WA 86112121

Vehicles For Hire

DAILY/ WEEKLY/ MONTHLY Van/ 10/ 14/ 24ft Lorry for Rent. Special Offer! WCEGA Plz #03-18. Call: 64695691

JURONG AREA. TRUCKS with/ w/o canopy. Van. Long/short term. 28 Benoi Pl. 68634186

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100% LOAN FOR COE. Special rate: in house / direct bank. One stop service! 97272658 / 64695691 Thiam Heng

Scrap Vehicles

INSTANT CASH FOR All types of cars, lorries and vans. No obligations, call 9009-8718
HIGHEST CASH OFFER for all scrap/ export/ used & commercial vehicle. 9661 8888

Motorcycles/Scooters

AUCTION SALE CLOSING 4June '24 FBN2044M Honda CRF1000A (COE Expire Aug '28). Sold on 'As is where is' cond. T&Cs Apply. Call 64532121 / WA 86112121.

D04 SENTOSA/TELOK BLANGAH HOUSES FOR SALE

STEVE TAY STRE Modern Villa with berth and lift. L8200, B8000 sqft. 2.5sty, 6 bdrms. Beautiful. \$18M! 96307741

D05 PASIR PANJANG/WEST COAST/ CLEMENTI TOWN HOUSES FOR SALE

BELOW BANK VALUE. F'hold Designer new detached TOP, Faber Drive, 6 bdrm+ ensuite Pool+lift. Nan Hua. 91682274

D10 BUKIT TIMAH/ HOLLAND RD/ TANGLIN HOUSES FOR SALE

WHITE HOUSE PARK 15000/ 18000 sf. Beautiful modern hse. Just TOP, best layout, quality finish. Park 8 cars. sole agt 94567348 Newsman

D10 BUKIT TIMAH/ HOLLAND RD/ TANGLIN HOUSES FOR SALE

HOLLAND PARK 21800 sqft. Beautiful rectangular land for rebuild. Charming house, easy access. Only \$2200psf yet neg 94567348 Newsman

STEVE TAY STRE Rare elevated GCB @ Namly. Wide front. Unblock greenery L14000 sf/ B7000. Dont miss! 96307741

STEVE TAY STRE GCB unblock greenery! Regular elevated plots. Rebuild/ reno 10000 - 30000sf land avail.96307741

JALAN SAMPURNA 8900 sqft. 2-sty old hse. Beautiful, elevated land. Panoramic view, quiet. 94567348 Sole Agent

NASSIM ALMOST 30000 sqft Elevated land, quiet. Only \$3300 psf yet neg. Joanne 93839025 sole agt Newsman

D11 NEWTON/ NOVENA HOUSES FOR SALE

OPEN HOUSE BY Appointment Just TOP! Chee Hoon Ave L15499/26000 sf Brand new, best layout. 12 car lots, huge gdn, \$53M. Near Botanic Gdn Joanne 93839025 Newsman

HARLYN RD 5600/ 7700 sf. Beautiful elevated land, park 6 cars. Good layout, \$17.8M. 94567348 sole agt Newsman

D19 SERANGOON GDN/ HOUGANG/ SENGKANG/ PUNGGOL HOUSES FOR SALE

S'GOON GDNS 2630/5400SF 2sty + Basement + Attic. 12m Pool. TOP in 2015. 5+1 rms. \$6.2m up. Cheong 98379888

D07 ROCHOR/ BUGIS/ BEACH RD PTE APTS FOR SALE

CONCOURSE SKYLINE @ BEACH ROAD
• Apt type: 1 Bedroom / 1 + Study / 2 + Study / 4 + Study
• Area: 818 / 1,087 / 1,442 / 2,142 sq ft
• Price: from \$1.6k Million upwards
• Selling with Tenancy/ Vacant possession
Hong Lok Land Ltd
Tel: 6390 2487/ 6282 8181

D08 LITTLE INDIA PTE APTS FOR SALE

AUCTION 20/6. DICKSON Rd off Jln Besar walk up apt#02 est 947sf L999yr. Little India MRT. \$1.3xm. 93879668 KF

D09 ORCHARD/ CAIRNHILL PTE APTS FOR SALE

V.VERY CHEAP 3BDRM F'hold gd layout. High fir/ ceiling ht High resale gain/ value / rent V. Serious seller. 93699859.

D10 BUKIT TIMAH/ HOLLAND RD/ TANGLIN PTE APTS FOR SALE

THE GRANGE BEST Stack 2300 sqft 4 rms. High Fir. Nice View/MRT. H 96783035

CALL 6289 9988 ADVERTISING SOLUTIONS

D26 UPP THOMSON/ SPRINGLEAF/ LENTOR HOUSES FOR RENT

BEAUTIFUL RESORT STYLE Lendor Semi-D. F/furn. 7 rms with pool. Owner 9029-7552

D09 ORCHARD/ CAIRNHILL PTE APTS FOR RENT

SCOTTS SQUARE 1-BR for rent. Immediate Or Sale. High fir Good Facing. Priced to deal. Call Owner 6737 0044

PRIVATE APTS WANTED (RENT/ BUY)

ALL AREAS. ANY condition all types of property. Pte/ HDB. Owners call 9005 7801 Ram

HDB/ HUDC APTS WANTED (RENT/ BUY)

HOUSE OWNER SELLING or renting out? Ready to serve, 20 yrs experience, Licence agt Jenny 93867331 Propnex

FACTORY/ INDUSTRIAL SPACE FOR RENT

\$1.30PSF NEG! RARE 10k-140k sf. Open/covered, 8-30 tons overhead crane/ ramp-up/ recycle. Pls call 90042367

FACTORY/ INDUSTRIAL SPACE FOR SALE

Knight Frank Bank's Sale
AUCTION 20/6. PLATINUM @ Pioneer 3sty B2 terr, lift, 9m high, 6544sf bal 20yrs dorm own carpk \$2.XM 93879668

TAISENG FREEHOLD LIGHT industrial building Land appx 39000ft / build up 110K sqft Agent OTT Lamhh 91016433

**UBI B1 FACTORY URA Land Bal 35yrs Land 22k/ GFA 45k Tel : 83382283 / 93373217

SHOP SPACE FOR RENT

TUAS KOPITIAM, MINI-MART, phone/barber shop, warehse. Near many factories & dorm with 20K workers. Agt wel-come. Call owner 91058518

SULTAN PLAZA #03 116sqm, Shop/ Office/ All Trades. MRT VTO HP/SMS: 91261988

BLK 10 HAIG Road shophouse for rent. 800sf below/ 3rms upstairs. Call 80143786

SHOP SPACE FOR SALE

RARE! KING GEORGE'S Ave Freehold. Grd floor & level 2 2,282 sf. \$4.XM. Don't miss. Shannon Ling 92768768 PN

RARE 3-LEVELS APPROVED FH F&B in Dist II! Very well renovated unit! One of the best buy! Jonathan 93630818

WAREHOUSES/ STORAGE SPACE FOR RENT

BUKIT BATOK WAREHOUSE 16Ksf. Ground Floor Available Call 93221810



YOU'RE DEFT AT AVOIDING ROADBLOCKS

Avail yourself to jobs befitting your skills and strengths.

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Executive Appointments 6289-8822 | www.sphclass.com.sg | Jobs 6289-9988

Professionals/ Executives

706

Professionals/ Executives

706

WALK-IN CAREER FAIR @ CERTIS EAST COAST
206 Bedok South Avenue 1 Singapore 469334 (Gate B)
5th June 2024 (Wednesday) | 10am to 5pm

Postions Available:

- HR Specialist
- Finance Executive
- ICT Executive
- Admin cum Customer Service Executive

Requirements: Singaporean only



For more positions and Pre-Event Registration, Scan Here

SALARY Range from \$2,400* to \$3,200*

*Terms & Conditions apply.

Nursing/ Health Care

721

Nursing/ Health Care

721

ISS PEOPLE MAKE PLACES

1. Patient Transfer Porter (*\$2150)
Part Time (Flexible work day)
2. Trolley Delivery Assistant (*\$2000)
3. Ambulance Driver (*\$2200)

* Gross up to & Inclusive of Joining bonus

Singapore General Hospital / Contact 9128 0037
(9am-5pm, Monday-Friday)

AWS on Anniversary Year
*T & C APPLIES

Lecturing/ Teaching

715

KOVAN TUITION CTR. Relief Tutor (2 months). 2 days per week. Teach Pri/ Sec Math. S'porean only. Training provided. Message: 93805070

Nursing/ Health Care

721

CLINIC AT HOUGANG Central requires Full/Part-Time Clinic Assistant. Call: 6881 2389

Sales

730

MAID AGENCY NEEDS Sales Staff. CEI preferred. Tel 9627 1191 (03C4432)

Call Centres/ Telemarketing

734

LOOKING FOR PART-TIME telemarketers! Call 63713963 Call the list of leads and fix up appointment, training and additional Incentive provided

EXPERIENCED TELEMARKETER MON-FRI 10am-3pm (Flexible) \$12/hour. S'poreans only Whatsapp Jensen 83826148

TELEMARKETER \$10-\$15 P/HR. Toa Payoh near MRT & bus terminal. Lincoln @ 90661713

Hotel/ Restaurant/ Lounge

742

COUNTER CREW NEEDED at Bugis, 6-7hrs at \$12-\$15 p/hr, meal provided. 9881 6696

Administrative/ Clerical

748

ACCOUNTS CUM ADMIN ASSISTANT

- 5 days. 8am to 6pm
 - Salary \$2000
 - North Area
 - Start work immediate
- Email CV to hr_cfspl@yahoo.com

HR ADMIN.AT LEAST 2 years HR experience.Familiar with MOM regulations.Preferable experience in the Service Line Industry Interested Call: 67490128

ADMIN ASSIST REQD at Ubi area. 5 days work/wk. No exp needed but reqd basic computer skills. Call 68441345

CAR DEALER REQUIRES Experienced Admin at BT Batok & Balestier. Call 62503339/ e-mail: edmunddevr@gmail.com

PERFORM ADMIN FUNCTION, accounts receivable, info@soyee.com.sg. Tel 6294 4233

Accounting/ Bookkeeping

749

ACCOUNTS CLERK @ UBI Techpark / 5 days' work LCCI Cert experience in autocount Call 67490128

NEED ACCOUNT / Admin, able to start immed, please call 9627 1191 (03C4432)

CALL 6289 9988
ADVERTISING SOLUTIONS
STClassifieds

Cleaners

769

★\$500 JOINING BONUS★ CONDO BLOCK CLEANER (NO TOILET)

- \$1600 (July 1750) / \$60 per day (Every Friday pay)
- 8am to 5pm
- Marina Parade Siglap/ Bedok/ Orchard/Bukit Timah/ Newton

Call 63399747 / 63346559 (NO AGENT PLEASE)
Interview at #05-44 Peninsula Plaza

PUBLIC AREA CLEANER @

ORCHARD ROAD

SALARY UP TO \$1800/

6DAYS WORK

8AM TO 5 PM

Call 69581599



CONDOMINIUM CLEANER @ Pasir Ris, Flora Rd, Punggol, Tanah Merah, Bukit Batok, Chua Chu Kang. 1) Rubbish Collector/ Floater 2) Compound/Carpark 3)Block Cleaner Weekly/ Daily Cash Pay avail. S'porean only. Call 98817575

HOTEL CLEANERS NEAR MRT @ Orchard Areas / Marina Sq 7 am -3pm / 8 am -4 pm / 2-10pm/3pm-11pm/11pm-7am Salary \$1700-\$1900, 5 or 6 days, meal provided Call 67490128

CLEANERS NEEDED URGENTLY at Mandai Depot. 5.5 days. Transport provided at Khatib MRT. Singaporeans only. H/p: 98585851 (Mr Azmi)

FULL TIME CLEANER. Yishun / Sembawang / Woodlands. Salary \$1740 - \$2100, Join In Bonus. 7am to 4pm, 5.5 days week. 97582800/ 96481800

CONDO CLEANER AT Bedok, Holland Hill & Keppel Bay. 6days, Singaporean. Pls Call 92333353 / 86545886

RUBBISH COLLECTOR & Block cleaner @ 1) Holland Rd 2) Pasir Panjang Rd 5.5 days (\$1700-\$1800) Call 67490128

FULL/PART-TIME OFFICE/ SUPERMARKET CLEANERS upto \$2300 at Novena, Kallang, Pasir Ris, Bishan. 86126133

\$100/NIGHT DISCO CLEANER at Clarke Quay Fri/Sat, 9pm-6am. Full-time upto \$2.5K. Meal provided, 86126133

OFFICE PANTRY ASST. Raffles Place. Able to speak simple English, can use whatsapp. \$1800. Tel: 63832659

BLOCK SWEEPER NEEDED at Jurong East. Singaporean only. No agent please. Contact: 9831 2800

CLEANERS \$2K 8-6PM/1-10PM Cairnhill/ Tg Pagar/ Chinatown/ Queenstown/ Tanglin. S'porean. Call 83806830

LOOKING FOR FULL time condo Cleaner at River Valley area. High salary, incentive. Near Main Road. 93393084

TOILET/ OFFICE CLEANER @ 6 Tai Seng Link, near MRT, 5 days, \$1740. Call 8201-1864

CLEANERS NEEDED. CENTRAL Region. Interested pls call H/p: 9238 2012 / 9122 5584

FULL-TIME CLEANER @BISHAN Area/ 6 days week/ Shift work/ call 81132460

FULL-TIME CLEANERS near Queenstown/Commonwealth MRT. Good salary 98320938

FULL-TIME CLEANERS. NEAR Outram Park/ Tg Pagar MRT. Good salary. Call 9832 0938

FULL TIME CLEANERS. Near Tampines MRT/ Loyang Lane Good salary. Call 9115-6837

FULL-TIME CLEANERS. NEAR Telok Blangah / Alexandra Point. Good Pay 9115 6837

FULL TIME CLEANERS. Near Tan Kah Kee/ Sixth Ave MRT. 5 day week. Call 91156837

CHANGI NORTH. DAILY Wages Cleaner 8am to 4pm \$70 per day, 5 days. Tel: 6383 2659

HIRING SMALL FACIAL shop Cleaner at Parkway Parade fr 8am-1pm. Tel: 6749 4696

PART-TIME CLEANER@ Changi Airport Retail Store. 6 days, 7-11am, \$11K. Call 8433-3223

CLEANER REQUIRED @ One North MRT. 7am-4pm. 6days. Pls Call: 8541 9165

CLEANER REQUIRED @ Bukit Batok. 8am-5pm. 5.5days. Pls Call: 97516771

\$1570-2000 JLN BESAR, Pioneer, Woodlands, Jurong East, Yio Chu Kang. Call 96533707

HIRING CONDO CLEANERS (6 days wk) at Orchard. Start immed. Please call 91885482

*CLEANER AT CHINATOWN/ Jin Besut/ TaiSeng / Pioneer Call 8612 1244/ 9791 7104

Cleaners

769

CLEANER AT HOUGANG. 6Days 9am-6pm. Pls Contact 86278266

RESTROOM CLEANER. \$1800 @ Tampines Hub. S'poreans. 7-3pm. 91834838/ 90610044

\$1900 SCHOOL CLEANER. Thomson, 5/5.5 days. Immed Singaporean. Call 80541465

FLOATER \$2.3K 9AM-6PM @ Central Area. S'porean. Immed. Call: 92978669

CLEANER \$2K 8-6PM/1-10PM Ang Mo Kio/ Potong Pasir area. S'poreans. 81896955

TOILET & COMPOUND Cleaner. Sentosa Condo 6days \$2050 WA: 88319097 / 86012511

CLEANER, CHANGI SOUTH. 7.30-4.30pm 5.5 days. Up to \$1900. 88319097 / 86012511

CONDO CLEANER \$1650UP 5.5 days 7am-4pm near Lakeside MRT, Sun&PH off. 92978669

Despatch/ Delivery

772

CLASS 3 DELIVERY Driver for Frozen Food Co @Woodlands Loop. Pls call: 96907328

Drivers/ Chauffeurs

775

We are hiring
47-seater Bus Driver
• Class 4 & 5 licence preferred
• With Vocational Licence
• Staying in the West
No Agent please
Interested please call 8500 4506

23-SEATER BUS DRIVERS. Class 4 with VL Shuttle bus service. Able to liaise with English and Mandarin speaking clients. Monthly \$2900 & above. Work 4days rest 2 days. Pls call/ WhatsApp 81572322 (No agent please)

MARINE SUPPLIES COMPANY requires Delivery Driver, class 3/ class 4 driving lic. 5.5 days work week. Interested please walk-in interview at 51 Jalan Buroh, S'619495, call: 67480666 no agt please

CLASS 4 DRIVER needed, able to start immed. Please call 67866747 / 82189561

CLASS 4 SHUTTLE Bus Driver with VL. Start in Punggol or Tampines pref. 8366 9095

OFFICE AT JURONG requires Class 4 Drivers. 5.5day week Tel: 68630108

CLASS 3 DRIVER for 14-seat lorry. Start immediately. Redhill area. Call 90124533

PERSONAL DRIVER 5.5 Days Good driving record. East area. S'porean. 63488488

Part-time/ Temporary

783

KOVAN TUITION CTR. Admin. 3 days per week for 3 mths. S'poreans only. Start immed. Please Message: 93805070

Other Positions

789

PRODN/ CANTEEN CLEANER/ Machine Operator/ Dish-washer. 6 days work, 7am to 3pm. At Micron (Bendemeer. Near Boon Keng MRT). Salary above \$1600. Contact: Johnny Koo 98165179, Xiaoya 89220592 *Joining incentive of \$1K for new workers. Subject to terms and conditions*

***HIGHLY PAID GARDENERS. Singapore Islandwide. Higher Salary & Benefits. Interested, please call : +65 6250 5375

UP TO \$3.2K 11pm-7am/8pm-6am, Kitchen Cleaner/ Dish-Washer at Marina Square/ Pasir Ris/ Tg Rhu. 86126133

LANDSCAPE GARDENERS REQUIRED at Telok Blangah With/ without experience. \$1850 & above. 9782 8975



\$2K! FULL TIME/ Part Time Cashiers @ SPC Tampines Ave 7. No experience & Good benefits! Call: 65837301

AIRCRAFT FOOD ASST. Changi Training given. 6 days, 8 hrs shift. \$2200/mth. 91086787

CLEANERS URGENTLY NEEDED Please contact Joy at 91183884 for interview

ESSO QUEENSWAY HIRING Cashier and Pump Attendant, S'porean.Mr Loke 94554599

NOTICES

Tel 6289-8822 | Email notices@sph.com.sg | www.sphclass.com.sg

TENDER NOTICE



Tenders are invited from BCA Registered Contractors with WSHC's BizSAFE Level 3 & above for the following:

PROJECTS

(A) TERM CONTRACT FOR THE INSPECTIONS, EXTERMINATIONS AND ERADICATIONS OF RODENTS, MOSQUITOES, TERMITES, BEES' NESTS AND OTHER PESTS FOR THE PERIOD OF 1 JULY 2024 TO 30 JUNE 2027 (TENDER REF: JRTC/T020/2024)

CONTRACT DURATION:

Project (A) Contract Duration: 36 Months

ELIGIBILITY & FINANCIAL GRADE:

Project (A) FM04 Pest Control L2 and above

CLOSING DATE & TIME:

Project (A) 18 June 2024 at or before 12 noon

DOCUMENTS COLLECTION:

Project (A) On 4 June 2024 after 2.00 pm at Jurong-Clementi Town Council Block 255 Jurong East Street 24, #01-303, Singapore 600255.

The Town Council does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

No contract shall be awarded to a tenderer if the tenderer or any of its directors or employees has been debarred by the Town Councils and/or Statutory Boards and/or Government Bodies from participating in the same or all types of contracts.

TENDER DOCUMENTS FEE BY CROSSED CHEQUE (INCLUSIVE OF GST) (NON-REFUNDABLE)

Project (A): \$109.00 per set made payable to Jurong-Clementi Town Council

CORRIGENDUM



RE : TENDER NOTICE published in the Straits Times on 31 May 2024.

PROJECTS

(D) APPOINTMENT OF ARCHITECTS FOR JURONG-CLEMENTI TOWN COUNCIL'S PANEL OF CONSULTANTS FROM 1 JUNE 2024 TO 31 MAY 2027 (TENDER REF: JRTC-T019-2024)

Title has amended to reflect the correct title as " APPOINTMENT OF ARCHITECTS FOR JURONG-CLEMENTI TOWN COUNCIL'S PANEL OF CONSULTANTS FROM 1 AUGUST 2024 TO 31 JULY 2027 (TENDER REF : JRTC-T019-2024)

COMMERCE STREET will be closed from 8th June 2024 at 2200 hours to 9th June 2024 at 1100 hours. Samson Machinery Movers Pte Ltd

Lim Chin Poh
8102 6712

TENDER NOTICE

Snow City Singapore is seeking companies interested in investing in ice and snow play elements within our subzero chamber. We invite all interested parties to attend a tender briefing on Friday, 7 June 2024 at 10.00 am. The briefing will be held at Snow City Singapore located at 21 Jurong Town Hall Road, Snow City Building, Singapore 609433.

Attendance at the briefing is compulsory for all interested parties. This is an exciting opportunity to be a part of our unique and popular attraction. We look forward to seeing you there and discussing how we can work together to create a memorable experience for our visitors. Thank you.

INSOLVENCY, RESTRUCTURING AND DISSOLUTION ACT 2018 (ACT 40 OF 2018)
INSOLVENCY, RESTRUCTURING AND DISSOLUTION (PERSONAL INSOLVENCY) RULES 2020
IN THE GENERAL DIVISION OF THE HIGH COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
IN BANKRUPTCY NO. Between AL AUTOCAR PTE. LTD. (Singapore UEN No. 201502623Z) ... Claimant And MOHAMED ISMAIL BIN NOOR MOHAMED (NRIC No. S6848010H) ... Defendant

STATUTORY DEMAND UNDER SECTION 312 OF INSOLVENCY, RESTRUCTURING AND DISSOLUTION ACT 2018
NOTICE OF ADVERTISEMENT To: MOHAMED ISMAIL BIN NOOR MOHAMED (NRIC No. S6848010H) whose last known address is at 1648 Rivervale Crescent #04-300 Singapore 542164

TAKE NOTICE that a Statutory Demand dated the 15th day of March 2024 under Section 312 of the Insolvency, Restructuring and Dissolution Act 2018 has been issued against you for the sum of \$523,099.43 by AL AUTOCAR PTE. LTD. (Singapore UEN No. 201502623Z), of 61 Ubi Avenue 2 #04-15 Automobile Megamart Singapore 797416. The Creditors demand that you pay the above debt or secure or compound for it to the Creditors' satisfaction within twenty-one (21) days from the date of publication of the notice hereof. If you fail to do so, the Creditors may file a Bankruptcy Application against you.

If you wish to set aside the Statutory Demand, you must make an application to the High Court to do so within fourteen (14) days from the date of publication of this notice.

The Statutory Demand can be inspected by you at the office of the Solicitors for AL AUTOCAR PTE. LTD. (Singapore UEN No. 201502623Z), whose name and address appear hereunder: -

PARWANI LAW LLC 151 Chin Swee Road, #13-06 Manhattan House, Singapore 169876 Tel: 6734-9100 Ref: VP284030.23(ac) Dated this the 4th day of June 2024.

INSOLVENCY, RESTRUCTURING AND DISSOLUTION ACT 2018 (ACT 40 OF 2018)
INSOLVENCY, RESTRUCTURING AND DISSOLUTION (PERSONAL INSOLVENCY) RULES 2020
IN THE GENERAL DIVISION OF THE HIGH COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
IN BANKRUPTCY NO. Between AL AUTOCAR PTE. LTD. (Singapore UEN No. 201502623Z) ... Claimant And NORIZAN BT ABD RAHMAN (NRIC No. S7227520I) ... Defendant

STATUTORY DEMAND UNDER SECTION 312 OF INSOLVENCY, RESTRUCTURING AND DISSOLUTION ACT 2018
NOTICE OF ADVERTISEMENT To: NORIZAN BT ABD RAHMAN (NRIC No. S7227520I) whose last known address is at 1648 Rivervale Crescent #04-300 Singapore 542164

TAKE NOTICE that a Statutory Demand dated the 15th day of March 2024 under Section 312 of the Insolvency, Restructuring and Dissolution Act 2018 has been issued against you for the sum of \$523,099.43 by AL AUTOCAR PTE. LTD. (Singapore UEN No. 201502623Z), of 61 Ubi Avenue 2 #04-15 Automobile Megamart Singapore 797416. The Creditors demand that you pay the above debt or secure or compound for it to the Creditors' satisfaction within twenty-one (21) days from the date of publication of the notice hereof. If you fail to do so, the Creditors may file a Bankruptcy Application against you.

If you wish to set aside the Statutory Demand, you must make an application to the High Court to do so within fourteen (14) days from the date of publication of this notice.

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PARWANI LAW LLC 151 Chin Swee Road, #13-06 Manhattan House, Singapore 169876 Tel: 6734-9100 Ref: VP284030.23(ac) Dated this the 4th day of June 2024.

IN THE GENERAL DIVISION OF THE HIGH COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

Case No.: HC/CWU 139/2024)
In the matter of the Insolvency, Restructuring and Dissolution Act 2018 (Act 40 of 2018)

And
In the Matter of FAB MARKET PTE. LTD. (Singapore UEN No. 201330760G)

Between
DBS BANK LTD (Singapore UEN No. 196800306E) ... Claimant

And
FAB MARKET PTE. LTD. (Singapore UEN No. 201330760G) ... Defendant

ADVERTISEMENT OF WINDING UP APPLICATION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an application for the winding up of the above-named company by the High Court was, on 29 May 2024, filed by DBS BANK LTD, of 12 Marina Boulevard, Marina Bay Financial Centre Singapore 018982, a creditor, and that the winding up application is directed to be heard before the Judge sitting in the General Division of the High Court of the Republic of Singapore at 10.00a.m. on 21 June 2024; and any creditor or contributory of the company desiring to support or oppose the making of an order on the winding up application may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his counsel for that purpose; and a copy of the winding up application will be furnished to any creditor or contributory of the company requiring the copy of the winding up application by the undersigned on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

The Claimant's address is 112 Marina Boulevard, Marina Bay Financial Centre Singapore 018982.

The Claimant's solicitors are Shook Lin & Bok LLP of 1 Robinson Road #18-00, ALIA Tower, Singapore 048542.

SOLICITORS FOR THE CLAIMANT
SHOOK LIN & BOK LLP (REF: 2240802/NYK/YOS/DBSBL)

Note: Any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the winding up application must serve on or send by post to the Claimant's solicitors, notice in writing of his intention to do so. The notice must state the name and address of the person, or if a firm, the name and address of the firm, and must be signed by the person, firm, or his or their solicitor (if any) and must be served, or, if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the abovementioned not later than 14 June 2024 (at least 3 clear working days before the day appointed for the hearing of the winding up application).

APPLICATION FOR REPLACEMENT OF CERTIFICATE OF TITLE THE LAND TITLES ACT NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 43 of the Land Titles Act, an Application has been made to the Registrar of Titles by Chelliah Mary Elizabeth and Chelliah Rosalind Helen (Mrs Rosalind Potts), the personal representatives of the estate of Helen Chelliah Nee Dourado (deceased), care of 3 Raffles Place #06-01 Bharat Building Singapore 048617, for the issue of a new Certificate of Title to replace the Certificate of Title Volume 505 Folio 92 for 18 Chestnut Crescent Singapore 679373 which has been lost.

NOTICE is hereby given that the new Certificate of Title will be issued by the Registrar of Titles after fourteen (14) days from the date hereof unless valid written objection is lodged at the Singapore Land Authority, 55 Newton Road, #12-01, Revenue House, Singapore 307987, before the expiration of the said period of fourteen (14) days. Dated this 4th day of June 2024

life WILD THINGS AWAIT VISITORS



In a stark room, behind a pane of glass, a green iguana was spread out on a log, its bulbous eyes closed. Outside, beyond some empty benches, a peacock wandered around in a circle. It was a sunny morning in Brooklyn, and a California sea lion swam up on the edge of its pool and balanced there. It craned its neck, turning its head this way and that, squinting as three humans approached its tank. Could it be visitors? Yes. TEXT AND PHOTOS: NYTIMES



The Prospect Park Zoo has been closed since Sept 29, when it suffered damage to its facilities and infrastructure during extreme rain from Tropical Storm Ophelia.

The wreckage had been severe. At first, basement-level electrical systems, filtration systems, the boiler room, restrooms, staff locker rooms and education offices were all under water. In some buildings, the floodwater was up to the ceiling.

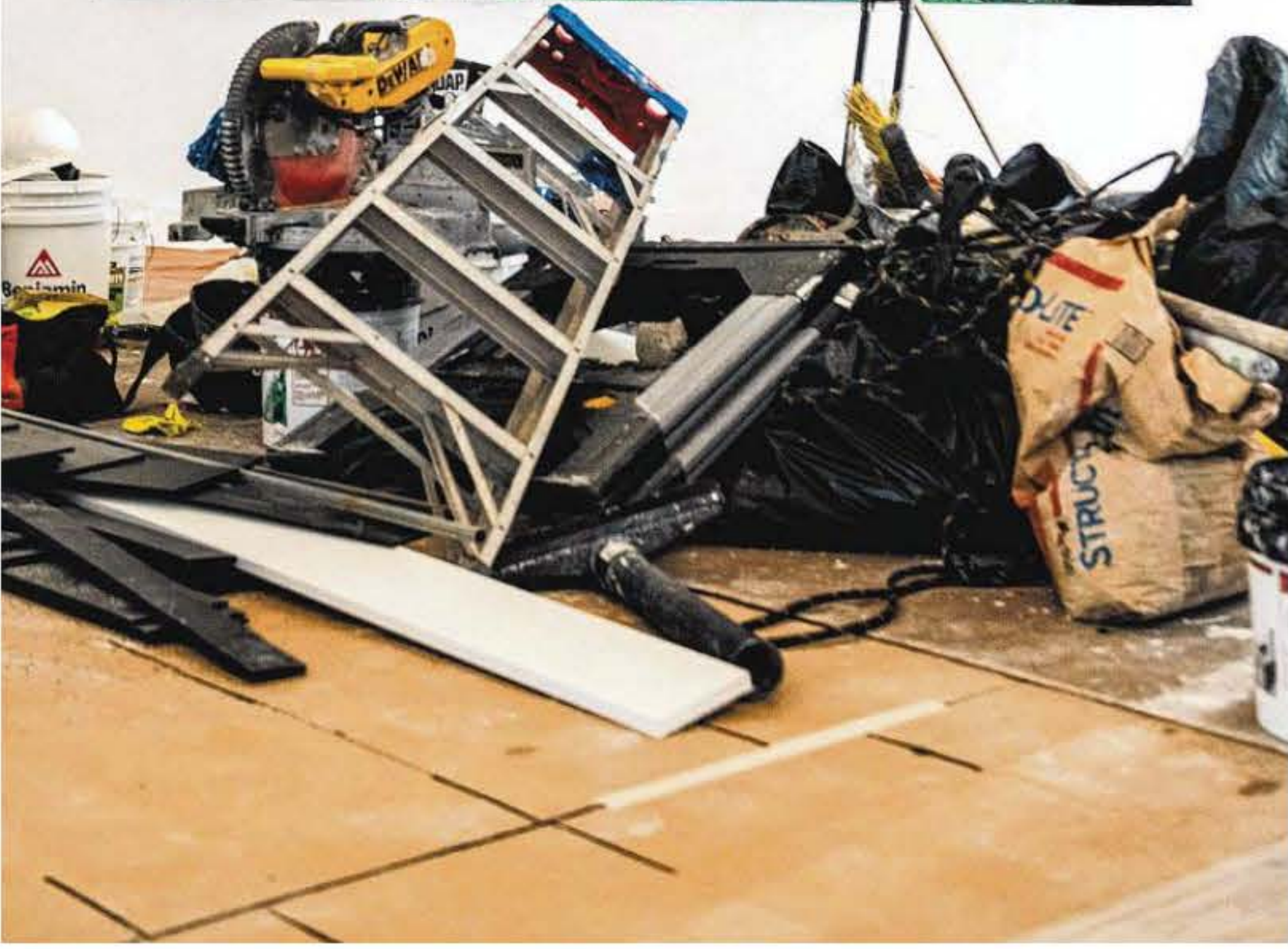
The zoo, which covers almost 5ha and is home to more than 400 animals, closed for 239 days. That is almost eight months – much longer than the four months it was closed in 2020 at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Luckily, no animals were harmed during the flood. Staff members, including keepers, security guards and maintenance employees, have been working their shifts as usual. But the logistics have been a challenge.

"I think at one point, we had 12 generators going," said Mr Craig Gibbs, the zoo's assistant director and curator of animals. "We were doing a lot of running around trying to make sure systems had power. When one generator would go out, we were running extension cords to another."

So far, the officials said, US\$6 million (\$\$8.1 million) has been spent on getting the zoo ready to receive guests again. It usually has 250,000 to 300,000 visitors a year.

It is back on the grid, and the electrical systems have been moved out to slightly higher ground. A temporary boiler is connected for heating. But there is more to be done.



"We have many years left of restoration work still to be accomplished," said Mr Craig Piper, vice-president of the Wildlife Conservation Society and director of City Zoos. And since climate change means severe storms have become more common in New York City, the zoo will need to be prepared for what is to come.

"It's going to be a long time before full recovery," he added, "because we want to make sure that we take steps for mitigation to prevent future flooding."

Nonetheless, a zoo without a crowd of children and parents, as well as being filled with empty food dispensing machines (right), is a hushed, strange thing – never mind the saying to describe chaos is "the place was a zoo".

The reopening is crucial, since the zoo has not had any revenue from admissions while it has been closed.

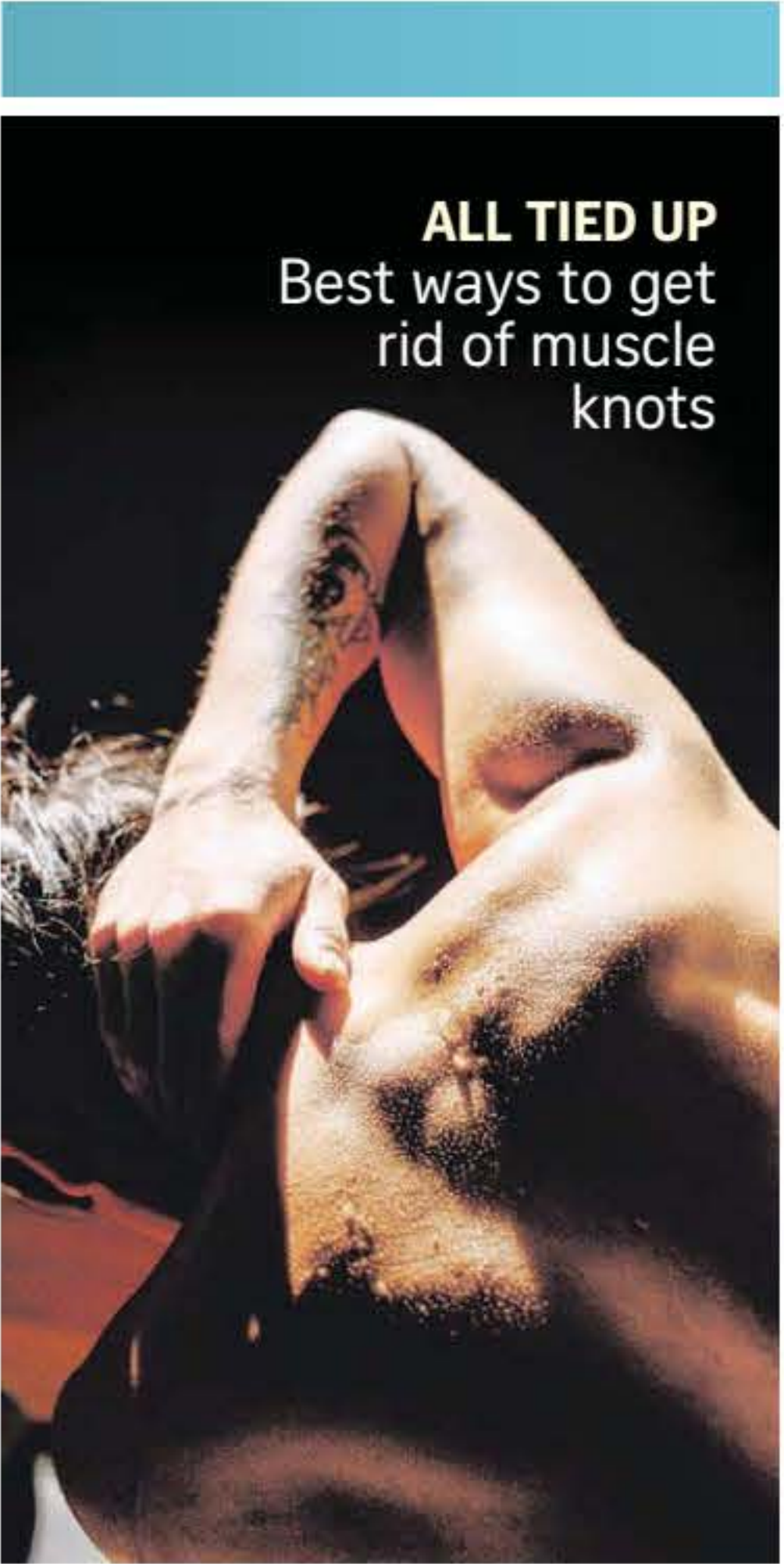


Now, both staff and the animals at the zoo – including (clockwise from left) a hamadryas baboon, a red panda and river otters – are ready to welcome friends and neighbours back.

In late May, media personnel were invited to the zoo to see the repairs and hear an announcement about the reopening. As one of them approached the barnyard enclosures, three sheep inside a pen perked up and moved closer to the fence. Two reared up and rested their front legs on the railing, putting their rectangular eyes at the visitor's eye level. An alpaca in a neighbouring pen snaked its neck over the top of the fence and batted its lashes.

"These guys have been waiting for a while," Mr Gibbs said. "They are so ready to see people."

In Life tomorrow



Preventable yet common

Why cervical cancer remains a top 10 cancer in Singapore