Berita Harian, 21 Februari 2026

Bisnes

EKSPORT merekodkan paras tertinggi dalam sejarah sebanyak RM272.08 bilion.

MOMENTUM DIPERKUKUH SEKTOR PERKHIDMATAN

DAGANGAN LEPASI RM3T

Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia mencapai prestasi perdagangan penting pada 2025 dengan jumlah perdagangan (barangan) melepasi angka RM3 trilion buat kali pertama dalam sejarah, kata Perbadanan Pembangunan Perdagangan Luar Malaysia (MATRADE).

MATRADE dalam satu kenyataan kelmarin berkata, momentum itu terus diperkukuhkan oleh sektor perkhidmatan, yang merekodkan lebihan perdagangan pertamanya selepas defisit selama 13 tahun sejak 2011, menandakan peralihan negara yang berjaya ke arah ekonomi bernilai tinggi dan dipacu perkhidmatan.

"Lebihan perdagangan sebanyak RM1.15 bilion menandakan pemulihan yang ketara, didorong oleh prestasi kukuh dalam perkhidmatan pelancongan dan pembuatan.

"Pemulihan ini memecahkan rekod pencapaian ekonomi negara, dengan jumlah perdagangan perkhidmatan melepasi paras RM500 bilion buat kali pertama dalam sejarah untuk mencapai paras tertinggi sepanjang masa iaitu RM543.01 bilion, iaitu peningkatan 9.2 peratus berbanding 2024," katanya.

Menurut agensi itu, eksport merekodkan paras tertinggi dalam sejarah sebanyak RM272.08 bilion, berkembang 12 peratus untuk melepasi import yang meningkat 6.4 peratus kepada RM270.93 bilion dan menjadikan lebihan perdagangan keseluruhan sebanyak RM1.15 bilion.

Pengerusi MATRADE Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican berkata, pencapaian lebihan perkhidmatan pertama dalam tempoh 14 tahun menggariskan kejayaan peralihan strategik negara ke arah ekonomi berasaskan pengetahuan bernilai tinggi.

"Dengan jumlah perdagangan mencecah rekod RM543.01 bilion, kami kekal komited untuk mengekalkan momentum ini dengan mengembangkan inisiatif promosi eksport kami ke seluruh pasaran utama dan baharu muncul, sejajar dengan strategi kepelbagaian kami bagi memastikan pertumbuhan mampan bagi pengeksport Malaysia," katanya.

Sementara itu, Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif MATRADE Abu Bakar Yusof berkata, prestasi luar biasa sektor perkhidmatan pada 2025 mencerminkan kesan inisiatif eksport bersasar menerusi pameran keupayaan tempatan dalam ekspo ikonik antarabangsa seperti Pertunjukan Udara Antarabangsa Paris (penerbangan dan aeroangkasa).

Selain itu, ADIPEC (ekosistem tenaga termasuk minyak dan gas huluan/hiliran, gas asli cecair, petrokimia dan tenaga boleh baharu), SEMICON Asia Tenggara & SEMICON Barat (semikonduktor dan industri berkaitan) dan Minggu Penjagaan Kesihatan Antarabangsa Malaysia (perkhidmatan penjagaan kesihatan).

"Semua acara perdagangan berkaitan dengan perkhidmatan utama ini selaras dengan sektor bernilai tinggi seperti yang ditetapkan dalam Pelan Induk Perindustrian Baharu (NIMP) bagi memastikan sektor perkhidmatan terus memacu kemakmuran negara," tambahnya.

Oleh itu, beliau berkata, agensi itu kekal berdedikasi untuk memperkasa penyedia perkhidmatan Malaysia termasuk perusahaan mikro, kecil dan sederhana untuk berkembang ke peringkat global di bawah pelan tindakan 2026.

The Borneo Post, 21 February 2026

January trade up 12.6 pct y-o-y to RM272.37 bln

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's trade performance in January 2026 remained robust, rising 12.6 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) to RM272.37 billion, compared to RM241.97 billion in the same period last year, said the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI).

In a statement, MITI said the growth was supported by the seventh consecutive month of export expansion, which recorded double-digit growth of 19.6 per cent to RM146.87 billion, while imports edged up by 5.3 per cent to RM125.50 billion.

"Trade surplus sustained its positive momentum for the 69th consecutive month since May 2020, totalling RM21.37 billion.

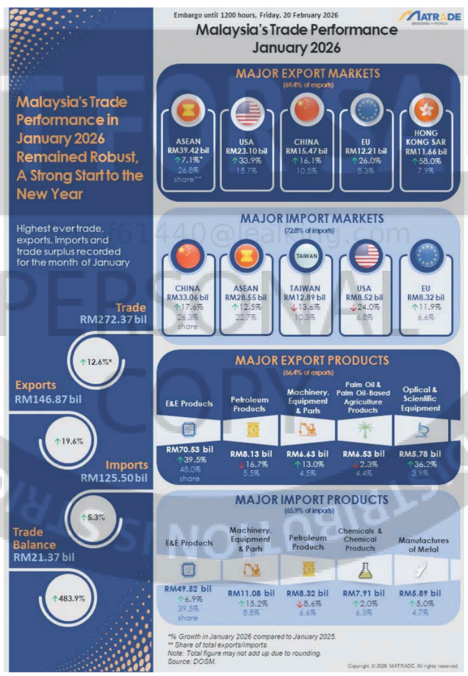
"Trade, exports, imports and trade surplus also recorded their highest monthly values ever for January," it said.

MITI said the impressive monthly export performance was driven mainly by robust demand for manufactured goods, particularly electrical and electronic products, which grew to RM70.53 billion, a surge of 39.5 per cent or almost RM20 billion.

It said export growth was further supported by higher shipments of optical and scientific equipment as well as machinery, equipment and parts.

"In terms of markets, exports to all major trading partners increased, led by strong double-digit growth to China, the United States, Taiwan and the European Union, while exports to Asean grew at a more moderate pace.

"Exports to Free Trade Agreement (FTA) partners also recorded broad-based expansion, particularly to Hong Kong, Korea, Mexico, India, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates and New Zealand, (with) exports to Taiwan and Hong Kong reaching their highest monthly values to date," it said.



In a separate statement, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) chief executive officer Abu Bakar Yusof said the agency will continue to play a proactive role in enhancing the nation's global export competitiveness.

He said this can be achieved by implementing exporter development programmes and export promotions to ensure this growth momentum remains sustainable throughout the year.

"This includes intensifying efforts to encourage exporters and micro, small, and medium enterprises to utilise 17 FTAs to strengthen market access and global competitiveness.

"For 2026, Matrade has outlined 203 high-impact programmes, including trade missions, international business matching sessions and capacity-building initiatives, aimed at empowering over 13,400 Malaysian companies to penetrate and maintain their positions in global markets," he said.

Moving forward, Matrade said the Ministry of Finance's Economic Outlook 2026 estimates that Malaysia's export growth will expand by 2.8 per cent for the full year, supported by stable demand in the global technology market, which will act as a primary catalyst for high-value export performance. — Bernama

New Straits Times, 21 February 2026

BUSINESS TIMES

SUSTAINING DOMESTIC DEMAND

JANUARY TRADE HITS RECORD RM272B

Strong trade signals solid 2026 outlook, say economists

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MALAYSIA'S trade outlook for 2026 looks promising, with January's strong performance signaling robust external momentum and healthy economic fundamentals, economists said.

However, they said the country's open economy remains vulnerable to external risks, particularly geopolitical tensions, trade policy shifts and supply chain disruptions.

Sustaining domestic demand, strengthening regional trade ties and boosting export competitiveness will be key to mitigating external shocks and supporting growth in 2026.

Malaysia's total trade rose 12.6 per cent year-on-year to RM272.4 billion in January, the highest ever recorded for the month since 1990.

The increase from RM242 billion a year earlier was driven by robust growth in exports and imports and a sharp expansion of the trade surplus, the Statistics Department said.

The performance marked the fifth consecutive month of growth since September 2025. Exports surged 19.6 per cent to RM146.9 billion, extending positive growth to seven straight months since July 2025, while imports rose 5.3 per cent to RM125.5 billion.

The trade surplus widened significantly, jumping 483.9 per cent to RM21.4 billion, marking the 69th consecutive month of surplus since May 2020.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said the growth trend appears sustainable, as trade activity remains firmly in positive territory.

"The sharp rise in the trade surplus indicates that net exports are expected to contribute positively to gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the first quarter of 2026," he told 'Business Times'.

Afzanizam said the ringgit's appreciation has not materially disrupted export momentum, suggesting that currency movements have remained supportive rather than restrictive.

On external risks, he said international trade has always been the immediate channel for the Malaysian economy whenever there are weaknesses in global demand.

"The main concern is how US import tariffs will affect demand.

"In addition, geopolitical risks could cause volatility in commodity prices, particularly crude oil, and disrupt global supply chains.

"Downside risks are likely to stem from the external sector. It is therefore critical that Malaysia's domestic demand remains resilient to offset potential risks," he said.

Universiti Teknologi Mara Business Management Faculty senior lecturer Dr Mohamad Idham Md Razak said the strong expansion reflects a recovery in global demand, particularly in electrical and electronics products, as well as firmer commodity prices.

While he expects growth to moderate as base effects normalise, he described a steadier pace as healthy and consistent with stable trade performance.

"A significantly higher trade surplus strengthens external balances, improves foreign exchange inflows and enhances confidence in the country's macroeconomic fundamentals," he said.

The country's open economy remains vulnerable to external risks, particularly geopolitical tensions, trade policy shifts and supply chain disruptions. NSTP FILE PIC

UniKL Business School economic analyst Assoc Prof Dr Aimi Zulhazmi Abdul Rashid said the latest data points to a positive outlook for Malaysia's trade and overall economy, noting that the rise in trade in the fourth quarter of 2025 was not merely a temporary spike.

He said stability stemming from reciprocal trade agreements continues to attract foreign investment and support demand, particularly in the electrical and electronics sector, with semiconductors accounting for the largest share.

"In addition, the exemptions on 1,800 Malaysian products, particularly crude palm oil, help keep our exports globally competitive.

"However, Malaysia's heavy integration into global supply chains, especially with key markets like China, the US and the European Union, also exposes the country to risks from geopolitical tensions," he added.

Aimi said Malaysia must continue diversifying into non-traditional markets, such as BRICS countries, Africa and South America.

He said exporters should be supported through financial incentives and stronger networking opportunities to help them penetrate these markets.

He said that Malaysia faced similar challenges during the Trump-era tariffs, which may have been underappreciated as the government navigated the situation and achieved higher productivity.

Aimi cautioned against complacency and said Matrade must urgently expand its reach into new markets.

Putra Business School Prof Dr Ahmed Razman Abdul Latiff said the growth in trade has the potential to remain sustainable if no major geopolitical events occur in the coming months.

He said potential conflicts, such as a US-Iran confrontation, could create uncertainty in global markets and weigh on Malaysia's trade.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, he said the trade surplus will support economic growth and currency stability in 2026, helping to meet the forecasted gross domestic product growth of 4.0 to 5.0 per cent.

Razman highlighted the importance of diversifying demand and markets, noting that intra-Asean trade has started to gradually increase, which is an encouraging trend.

"The economy could be affected if major powers such as the US, China or Europe become involved in global economic sanctions or regional conflicts.

"Therefore, it is important to diversify demand and markets. We are seeing intra-Asean trade gradually increase, which is encouraging," he said.

The Malaysia External Trade Development Corp (Matrade) said exports to Asean, the US, China, the EU and Taiwan accounted for 68.2 per cent of exports in January.

Exports to the US rose 33.9 per cent to RM23.1 billion, the highest January value on record.

Shipments to China increased 16.1 per cent to RM15.47 billion, while exports to Taiwan surged 79.4 per cent to RM9.93 billion, also a record monthly high.

Exports to Asean grew 7.1 per cent to RM39.42 billion, supported by higher shipments to seven member states, reflecting resilient regional demand and deeper supply chain integration.

By product, E&E remained the largest export segment, accounting for 48 per cent of total exports after surging 39.5 per cent to RM70.53 billion.

Matrade said the strong performance aligned with rising global semiconductor demand, fuelled by advances in artificial intelligence applications and technology upgrade cycles.

Other key contributors included optical and scientific equipment, which rose 36.2 per cent, processed food (16.5 per cent), transport equipment (13.8 per cent), and machinery, equipment and parts (13 per cent).

Exports to free trade agreement partners increased 14.5 per cent to RM95.22 billion, representing 64.8 per cent of total exports.

Growth was driven by markets such as Mexico, which surged 122.1 per cent to RM3.03 billion, Hong Kong (58 per cent), India (35.7 per cent), the United Kingdom (35.3 per cent), South Korea (27.6 per cent) and New Zealand (2.6 per cent).

Matrade chief executive officer Abu Bakar Yusof said the strong start to 2026 underscored the resilience and global competitiveness of Malaysian exporters.

He said rising E&E exports — particularly semiconductors, including electronic integrated circuits - position Malaysia to benefit from the projected 26.3 per cent expansion in the global semiconductor market this year.

"High-growth and high-value sectors such as optical and scientific equipment; transport equipment, particularly aerospace; and food products also recorded robust growth.

"This performance aligns with the aspirations of the New Industrial Master Plan 2030 and the 13th Malaysia Plan, which emphasise high value-added activities, innovation and the strengthening of domestic and global supply chains."