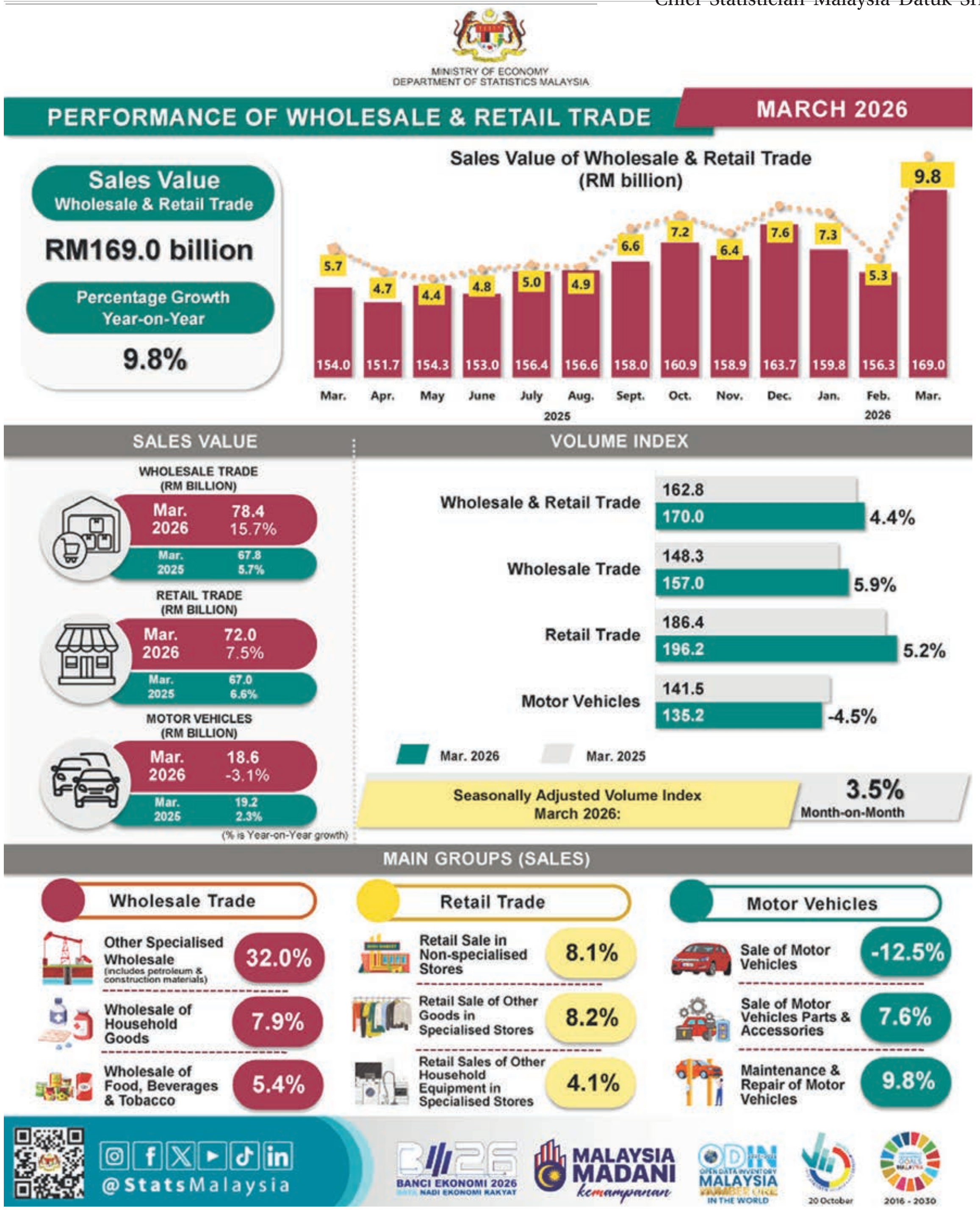
March wholesale, retail sales up 9.8%

E-money transactions surged by 64.3% year-on-year to RM33.3b, reflecting growing adoption of cashless payment methods



PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia's wholesale and retail trade recorded a total monthly sales amounting to RM169 billion for March 2026, representing a year-on-year increase of 9.8%, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia yesterday.

Chief Statistician Malaysia Datuk Sri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said: "The growth in sales recorded in March 2026 was primarily supported by the wholesale trade and retail trade sub-sectors.

"Wholesale trade registered total sales of RM78.4 billion, increasing by RM10.6 billion year-on-year, representing a growth of 15.7% while retail trade recorded sales amounting to RM72 billion, up RM5 billion from March 2025, registering a growth of 7.5%."

In contrast, he added the Motor vehicles sub-sector declined by RM0.6 billion, resulting in total sales of RM18.6 billion.

On the performance of the wholesale trade sub-sector, Mohd Uzir said the growth was mainly driven by the other specialised wholesale, which surged 32.0% to RM32.6 billion.

The increase was largely attributed to higher sales of petrol, diesel and lubricants following the rise in crude oil prices amid the current global economic conditions.

Moreover, higher sales were recorded for construction materials, fertilisers & agrochemical products, as well as liquefied petroleum gas.

In addition, the wholesale of household goods expanded by 7.9% to RM15.6 billion, supported by continued growth in the sales of pharmaceutical & medical goods, household furniture, and footwear.

The wholesale of food, beverages & tobacco also increased by 5.4%, underpinned by higher sales of vegetables, fruits,and biscuits, cakes, bread & other bakery products.

Furthermore, the wholesale of agricultural raw materials & live animals recorded a 5.7% increase to RM6.6 billion, mainly attributed to stronger demand for palm oil.

"The retail trade sub-sector continued to demonstrate steady performance in March, led by retail sales in non-specialised stores, which expanded by 8.1% to RM27.9 billion.

"This growth was supported by continued strength in supermarkets, mini markets, and department stores.

"Retail sales in specialised stores also increased by 8.2% to RM15.4 billion, underpinned by higher demand for pharmaceuticals, medical & orthopaedic goods, perfumery & cosmetics, clothing, and jewellery," said Mohd Uzir.

In addition, he added retail sales of automotive fuels rose by 10.6%, supported by increased travel activity in conjunction with the Eidal-Fitr celebrations.

The decline in the motor vehicles sub-sector during the month was mainly attributed to a 12.5% contraction in sales of motor vehicle, which amounted to RM8.9 billion.

This trend was consistent with data from the Malaysian Automotive Association (MAA), which reported total vehicle sales of 63,489 units, while the Road Transport Department (JPJ) recorded 67,846 vehicle registrations during the same period.

Nevertheless, other groups within the sub-sector continued to record positive growth, including sales of motor vehicle parts & accessories (7.6%), maintenance and repair of motor vehicles (9.8%), as well as sales, maintenance and repair of motorcycles (0.6%), reflecting sustained demand for vehicle servicing and after market components.

Meanwhile, online retail sales continued to record positive growth in March, with the sales index rising by 6.4% year-on-year, compared with 5.8% in the previous month. This indicates sustained strong demand in the e-commerce segment.

Digital payment activities continued to strengthen in March. E-money transactions surged by 64.3% year-on-year to RM33.3 billion, reflecting the growing adoption of cashless payment methods.

The Real-time Retail Payments Platform (RPP) also maintained strong performance, with total transactions amounting to RM369.4 billion, representing a growth of 24.1%.

Meanwhile, FPX transactions increased by 20.4% to RM48.7 billion. Credit card and debit card transactions were recorded at RM20.1 billion and RM15.5 billion, respectively.

In terms of the volume index, wholesale & retail trade recorded a year-on-year increase of 4.4%, mainly supported by the wholesale trade and retail trade sub-sectors, which grew by 5.9% and 5.2%, respectively.