

M'sia calls on Asean to strengthen support for inclusive business

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Malaysia has proposed the creation of necessary frameworks in Asean to promote inclusive business (IB), said Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

He said the initiatives would include financing that reaches the underserved, policies that reward inclusive models, regulations that lower barriers, and talent development that nurtures future champions.

Zahid said that the urgency is clear as 350 million people in Southeast Asia still lack access to credit, while 39 million micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) face a funding gap of up to US\$300 billion (RM1.27 trillion).

“It is in this spirit that I will soon launch the Capacity Building and Talent Development Framework for Inclusive Business in Asean.

“This is a practical guide to help ministries and agencies strengthen IB ecosystems and integrate them into national strategies,” he said in his speech,

which was read by Deputy Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Minister R Ramanan at the Asean Inclusive Business Awards 2025 yesterday.

Zahid emphasised that each Asean member state has its own realities and capacities, and policies that ignore this fail the very people they aim to help.

“That is why stakeholder engagement is essential. We must listen to farmers, traders, women entrepreneurs, and youth leaders.

“Inclusivity does not begin in grand halls; it begins in villages, towns, and communities across Asean,” he said.

The Asean Inclusive Business Awards ceremony, held in conjunction with the 8th Asean Inclusive Business Forum, marked a significant milestone in Asean’s journey toward a more inclusive and sustainable future.

The prestigious ceremony also honoured 10 outstanding companies from across Asean that have embedded inclusive business models into their operations and demonstrated how businesses can achieve profitability while uplifting low-income and underserved communities.

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