

Anwar: Asean must lead with unity, resilience amid global challenges

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Bernama

Asean cannot be a passive observer in the face of global economic and geopolitical challenges, but should take the lead in building resilience within the group, which has over 600 million people, said Anwar Ibrahim.

In stressing that, the prime minister said the bloc must take the lead in strengthening supply chains, empowering micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), investing in sustainability, and embracing innovation.

“With Asean agreement, I believe we are capable of revitalising economic strength, not only for Malaysia but for the region as a whole, making it an important and critical region in facing challenges, and most importantly, making economic power a basic strength,” he said.

He was speaking at the Gala Dinner for the 57th Asean Economic Ministers’ Meeting and Related Meetings at Taman Botani Perdana in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Anwar also welcomed the proposal to convene the first-ever joint Asean Foreign and Economic Ministers' Meeting next month, describing it as a bold and timely initiative.

“It signals Asean’s resolve to address the interlinked challenges of geopolitics and geoeconomics with unity and institutionalised coherence,” he said.

The prime minister said Malaysia was proud to host and support the historic undertaking, which he hoped would chart shared principles to guide Asean in navigating complex realities in the years ahead.

He further underlined Malaysia’s commitment to inclusive growth, stressing that no member state should be left behind and that the dividends of integration must be equitably shared.

Looking ahead, Anwar pointed out that Timor-Leste’s admission into Asean by the end of October would mark another milestone.

“Having just returned from addressing the Timor-Leste Parliament this (yesterday) morning, their admission into Asean will further strengthen the region’s unity, enhance our relevance, and deepen our resilience in the face of global uncertainties, he said.

Priority economic deliverables

Earlier, Investment, Trade, and Industry Minister Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz said Malaysia's theme of inclusivity and sustainability as Asean chair was not merely a slogan but a guiding compass in the face of global uncertainties.

"In a world reshaped by rapid transformation and rising uncertainty, Asean must demonstrate not fragility, but unity," he added.

He said the 18 Priority Economic Deliverables (PEDs), which have been set, would ensure Asean is not only future-ready but also future-proof.

At the same time, Zafrul said most of the PEDs are on track for delivery by the end of Malaysia's term as Asean chair after months of productive engagements, and these represent real progress for businesses, MSMEs, and the people.

"The outcomes of our meetings and engagements over the past nine months give us reason to be optimistic. Despite headwinds, Asean has outpaced and continues to outperform the world economy in key metrics such as gross domestic product (GDP) and foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow," he said.

With 680 million people, a growing middle class, and a digitally savvy and young population, Zafrul said Asean is also fast becoming one of the most dynamic

markets in the world.

“However, we must continue to address vulnerabilities by developing our industries’ capacity, harmonising regulations, generating more intra- and extra-Asean trade and empowering our people,” he added.

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