



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Indonesian President Joko Widodo (fifth from left) and Asean leaders linking hands for a group photo in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

CHALLENGES

'ASEAN SUMMIT BOOSTED TIES'

Agreements reached are proof bloc stands firm by its principles, says PM

LABUAN BAJO (Indonesia)

THE 42nd Asean Summit, which concluded yesterday, strengthened and increased regional cooperation, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said agreements were reached in matters of economy, electric vehicle ecosystems, local currency transaction issues, and better digital payment models among Asean members.

Speaking to Malaysian media,

he said the agreements were proof that Asean stood firm by its principles despite criticism that it was "a bit weak" in tackling challenges.

He said leaders had reached a consensus to ensure the Asean Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) remained as its main pillar for relations with nations in the Indo-Pacific.

He said the AOIP was balanced and upheld regional security, stability and its wellbeing, besides encouraging an open, inclusive and sustainable cooperation.

"The leaders agreed to maintain their stand and to defend Asean's position as free zone and to avoid being involved in any conflict instigated by super powers."

He said his reiteration of the setting up of an Asian Monetary Fund to strengthen the region's economic dependence and its se-

curity network received positive response from the leaders.

However, he said it was not discussed in detail and was still at its initial stage.

On Myanmar, he said Asean agreed to defend its Five-Point Consensus (5PCs) to resolve the conflict, while managing matters related to humanitarian aid.

He said this way of resolving the conflict was based on international regulations and consultation with stakeholders in Myanmar, and would encourage the success in implementing the 5PCs.

"Our stand is now more clear because any delay in the Myanmar issue will burden the Rohingya. Malaysia also sees the number of refugees reaching more than 200,000."

He and his wife, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, returned to Malaysia from Komodo Inter-

national Airport about 2pm yesterday.

Yesterday, on the sidelines of the summit, he held discussions with four leaders on bilateral ties and cooperation

He paid a courtesy call on Sultan of Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and Pengiran Muda 'Abdul Mateen Bolkiah and expressed his wish to see Bandar Seri Begawan's involvement in the Annual Leaders' Consultation this year where Putrajaya is the host.

Anwar also met Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, Laotian Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone and Timor Leste Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak.

Eight leaders participated in the summit except Myanmar, which was not invited, and Thailand, which is facing a general election on May 14. **Bernama**