



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the plenary session of the 44th and 45th Asean Summits in Vientiane yesterday. On Anwar's left is Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei. **BERNAMA PIC**

LEVERAGING STRENGTHS

DEVELOP INTRA-ASEAN TRADE, SAYS ANWAR

Bloc can become world's 4th largest economy if it boosts fundamentals, PM tells summit

VIENTIANE

MALAYSIA has outlined several steps to develop trade, investor relations and digital transformation in Asean.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said although the region was experiencing strong economic growth, intra-Asean trade had remained low for the past few decades.

Anwar said he believed that there was huge potential for intra-regional trade to be enhanced, especially with the upgrading of the Asean Trade in Goods Agreement to be signed next year.

He said strengthening Asean fundamentals, the regional value chain and regulatory cooperation were among the steps that needed to be taken.

There was also a need to reinvent, restructure and recalibrate Asean economies and leverage each other's strengths, he added, apart from redrawing and securing regional supply chains and their linkages to the global economy.

"I believe that if we pursue this course with determination and commitment, Asean can achieve economic resilience and be on track to become the fourth largest economy (in the world) by 2030."

Anwar said this in Malaysia's statement at the plenary session



ZANARIAH ABD MUTALIB

of the 44th and 45th Asean Summits at the National Convention Centre here yesterday.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, expressed confidence that Timor Leste's admission into Asean would expand the bloc's economy and contribute to fulfilling a grand vision.

"Malaysia looks forward to the recommendations from our senior officials on measures to facilitate Timor Leste's early full membership into Asean."

He said although there was a focus on strengthening regional unity and economic growth, nations must remember that it was vital for Asean to explore and broaden economic partnerships beyond the bloc.

"Malaysia's proposal for the Asean-Gulf Cooperation Council + China Summit in 2025 is aimed at achieving exactly this. I would like to thank Asean member states for your support of this proposal."

Anwar also said member nations must remain united, as any division in the bloc could be exploited, leading to the undermining of Asean's priorities.

He said Asean member states should reject overtures that could cause division.

"In this vein, Asean must be unflinching and resolute in sending a clear message to the world, that Asean is and must remain

united and will continue to be the key driver of peace, security and cooperation in the region."

Anwar said, just as peace and stability were important for the continued growth and prosperity of the region, it was also vital for Asean to continue fostering and strengthening relations with dialogue partners and beyond.

"We cannot overstate the importance of dialogue and cooperation forming the fundamentals of amity and good relations.

"Therefore, we encourage our dialogue partners to manage their differences to obtain positive outcomes," he said.

Anwar said Malaysia, which would assume the Asean chairmanship next year, was committed to building a more inclusive and sustainable future for South-east Asia.

He said Malaysia was confident that Asean would be in a stronger position to face challenges and embrace opportunities, especially in celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Asean Economic Community in 2025.

"We look forward to the adoption of the Asean Community Vision 2045 and its Strategic Plans at the 46th Asean Summit.

"Indeed, these documents will chart our region's strategic pathways in years to come and reflect the hopes of our peoples for a peaceful, stable and prosperous region that will contribute positively to global development."

The prime minister also expressed his sympathy to Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam over the recent devastation caused by Typhoon Yagi, and said Malaysia was ready to help with recovery efforts.