

# ANWAR: ASEAN MUST BUILD UP SUPPLY CHAIN

**This is vital in light of US tariffs and global trade retaliation, says PM**

HANOI

**A**SEAN must build a robust and resilient supply chain ecosystem in the region to tackle geostrategic challenges, particularly in light of new tariffs imposed by the United States and retaliatory tariffs from affected countries.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said while some might perceive that Asean could benefit from the reshuffling of global supply chains, the reality was far more complex and difficult to implement.

"The question remains, can Asean truly capitalise on this change, or will we become caught in the rivalry of great powers?" he said in his keynote address at the Asean Future Forum 2025 here yesterday.

"In any case, we must ensure that any benefits from investment and trade are distributed fairly among member states and do not exacerbate inequalities."

He said the 10-nation bloc needed to adopt a new model of trade integration that aligned with global trends toward environmental sustainability.

"The economic development gap across our region is stark.

"For instance, the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of some Asean member states can be more than 34 times higher than others. This is a challenge we must address collectively.

"We must be committed to ensuring that no country in Asean is left behind in the pursuit of economic growth," he said.

In Hanoi for a two-day working visit that ended yesterday, Anwar, also participated in a panel discussion alongside Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Timor-Leste President Jose Ramos-Horta.

In his address, Anwar said Asean member states were fortunate to be located in the most peaceful region in the world, which was also home to fast-growing economies.



**SYARIFAH DAYANA SYED BAKRI**

"In this era of competition and differences, Asean must shine, fostering a region that is sustainable, harmonious and economically dynamic," he said.

He said Malaysia's approach to prosperity was centred on sustainability and equitable economic development, which were the core pillars of collaborative efforts.

"We must be committed to ensuring that no country in Asean is left behind in efforts to achieve economic growth.

"The strength of Asean lies in its ability to unite through dialogue and act as a robust economic bloc, harnessing its potential to navigate uncertainties," he added.

Meanwhile, during a press conference at the end of his visit, Anwar said Malaysia was a trading nation, and without incoming investments, some issues might remain unresolved.

"The investments we secure can help address several issues, such as creating job opportunities and boosting the country's economic capabilities.

"Alhamdulillah, we have achieved another record high growth in history. This achievement is critical for us.

"Investments from foreign companies such as Infineon, Microsoft and Google will help build a network of young talent, much of which is trained by these companies. Moreover, our universities also need to adjust the courses they offer, such as artificial intelligence (AI), connectivity and food technology," he said.

He said this when commenting on Malaysia's record-breaking approved investment in 2024, which reached RM378.5 billion.

This marked a 14.9 per cent year-on-year increase, with more than 6,700 projects across key sectors.

The Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry said total investment was expected to create more than 207,000 jobs, strengthening Malaysia's position as a major investment destination.

Despite facing global economic challenges, the country continued to attract significant investments, with domestic investment contributing RM208.1 billion (55 per cent) and foreign investment contributing RM170.4 billion (45 per cent).

Foreign investor confidence in Malaysia remained robust, with strategic investments from five major countries: the United States

with RM32.8 billion, Germany with RM32.2 billion, China with RM28.2 billion, Singapore with RM27.3 billion, and Hong Kong (RM7.4 billion).

Anwar addressed comments regarding his series of overseas visits last year, which were criticised for their cost.

He said that these trips were for work purposes.

"Do I need to keep going overseas? Some have commented on the expenses.

"We arrive at the hotel, hold meetings, attend bilateral discussions — that's our job. Once it's done, we return straight away. I didn't take a single

day off to play golf," he added.

Anwar said there were plans for foreign leaders to visit the country in the near future.

"We will receive a visit from South Africa in April. President Xi Jinping of China will also visit Malaysia.

"When we show friendship, they will come with business delegations that will provide exposure to opportunities in Malaysia," he said.



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**DATUK SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM**  
Prime minister