

# PM: Asean must blaze new trails

## Path to regional prosperity to be guided by inclusivity and sustainability

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia faces a significant task this year as it takes over the chairmanship of Asean at a time when the global landscape requires the regional body to chart new paths.

"This is a significant responsibility for Malaysia to unite the team and harness its strengths as one, ensuring that development remains sustainable," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said, Bernama reported.

"The need to bridge gaps, address issues faced by marginalised, impoverished or sidelined groups" must be considered, he added.

"This is our aim - to ensure that Asean equitably enjoys and shares prosperity without sidelining any group or region," Anwar said in his New Year 2025 address, which was aired on local television channels yesterday.

Malaysia has chosen "Inclusivity

and Sustainability" as the theme of its Asean chairmanship, and Anwar said that to fulfil the responsibility, Malaysians must collectively uphold the principle of striving for excellence by finding methods to achieve excellence and strengthen national unity first.

"Before we step into regional and international markets, our country must first be well-organised, governance must be enhanced, and corruption must

be eradicated," said Anwar.

Only then will we gain the respect of being a sovereign and responsible nation, he said.

"This is a great honour for the country and an opportunity to create a new chapter in regional and global agendas, which continue to face challenges such as the destruction, cruelty, oppression and occupation in Gaza and other critical areas," he said.

Laos handed over the Asean

chairmanship to Malaysia on Oct 11 during the 44th and 45th Asean summits and related summits in Vientiane. Malaysia officially assumes the Asean chair today.

Founded on Aug 8, 1967, Asean comprises 10 South-East Asian nations: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Timor-Leste's membership is still under consideration.