

# MEF keen to help Anwar shape Asean policies

> 'Msia's role as bloc chairman critical in providing leadership to adapt to challenges by strengthening intra-regional trade, digital transformation and supply chain resilience'

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**PETALING JAYA:** The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) is keen to work with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to shape Asean policies as the country has assumed the chairmanship of the bloc on Jan 1.

MEF president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman told *theSun* the chairmanship provides excellent opportunities for Asean to achieve rapid transformation.

"Malaysia's role is critical in providing leadership on how the region must adapt to challenges by strengthening intra-regional trade, digital transformation and supply chain resilience.

"Anwar is in a position to implement the Asean Economic Community (AEC) 2025 blueprint, under which are key matters such as digital economy integration, promoting green energy transitions and addressing food security."

He said these are highly critical issues due to global supply chain uncertainties, and with Malaysia's Asean chairmanship, MEF believes the bloc will be strengthened, intra-trade and investment promoted and climate change addressed.

Syed Hussain is also chairman of the Asean Confederation of Employers (ACE), whose members include nine other Asean employer organisations, and the Confederation of Asia

Pacific Employers (Cape), whose 20 members comprise employers and business organisations throughout the Asia Pacific.

He said ACE, which will hold its meeting in the first quarter of 2025, could go a long way in supporting Malaysia's Asean chairmanship, while Cape can be leveraged for wider influence on policy matters.

"As the ACE and Cape chairman, I will ensure MEF pushes initiatives that address access to education, labour mobility through mutual recognition arrangements, wider social security coverage and enhancements to worker protection."

He said with Anwar's vast international experience and exposure, he would lead Asean towards a more inclusive, sustainable and collaborative future.

"Malaysia's Asean chairmanship comes at a time when the bloc is facing various challenges - from economic recovery to geopolitical uncertainties. These require decisive leadership, collaborative solutions and a commitment to its founding principles of unity and cooperation through consensus building."

Syed Hussain said Anwar has vast political expertise and is a visionary with strong diplomatic acumen to guide Asean toward a more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future.

He added that he is keen to work in partnership with the Madani government and would make recommendations in tandem

with his positions as he sees the importance of inclusivity and people-centric policies within Asean.

He said MEF is also eager to assist Anwar in enhancing youth and civil society engagement within its processes because empowering them and the relevant stakeholders would bridge the gap between policy-making and on-ground realities to ensure Asean policies resonate with and benefit the 680 million citizens within the bloc.

"Our 2025 ACE chairmanship reflects our influence in the Asean business and labour ecosystem, which means we can help Malaysia to shape regional policies related to labour, employment and businesses.

"With this, our ACE and Cape stewardship present opportunities for MEF to further Anwar's vision for the bloc and advocate progressive employment practices, including workplace modernisation, digital transformation and sustainability."

Syed Hussain said under its ACE chairmanship, MEF would lead initiatives for greater tripartite collaborations among Asean, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE).

"We are keen to help Asean harmonise labour standards and practices across the bloc as this will enable greater economic integration and cross-border investments, especially since MEF is well-positioned to address the challenges faced by MSMEs in less-developed Asean economies to ensure inclusive growth.

"Malaysia and Anwar can count on our support and backing as we believe our partnership will result in more significant roles as we represent Asean employers in global platforms such as the ILO and IOE."