

'GREENER ASEAN IS STRONGER ASEAN'

NEW STRAITS TIMES 20 JUN 2025

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Sustainable development now a priority, says Anwar

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A TRULY people-centred Asean can only be realised through the development of a greener and more resilient region, said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The prime minister, who chairs Asean this year, said that beyond its economic potential, sustainable development was now an urgent priority due to the growing impact of climate change on people's livelihoods.

He said the resounding success of the recent Asean-GCC-China Summit demonstrated not only Asean's convening power but also the bloc's strong focus on leveraging economic synergies and building institutional cooperation.

"The conclusion of the Digital Economic Framework Agreement will unlock the vast potential of the region's digital economy.

"More importantly, enhanced intra-regional connectivity will create greater opportunities for domestic local businesses to ex-

pand in the region.

"As the world transitions towards a greener and more sustainable economy, Asean must adapt and seize emerging opportunities and partnerships.

"We are intensifying our efforts in energy transition and better practices, including the development of sustainable investment guidelines and advancing the Asean power grid."

He said this in his keynote address at the 38th Asia-Pacific Roundtable.

Anwar said that during the recent Asean Summit, leaders made a breakthrough on the power grid, describing it as a phenomenal achievement for regional cooperation.

Looking ahead, he said, Asean was working to upgrade trade agreements among member states and dialogue partners.

"Our strength lies in our ability to maintain peace and foster understanding.

"However, our weakness has long been the lack of intra-Asean trade and joint investments — a shortcoming that is now a key focus for Asean leaders, especially in the current climate of rising protectionism.

"We must remind ourselves that trade is not a sideshow to security — it is part of the scaffolding that holds our region together. When trade falters, fractures follow."

He said it would be shameful for Asean to turn a blind eye to the crisis in Myanmar.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim greeting participants at the 38th Asia-Pacific Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC FROM ANWAR'S FACEBOOK PAGE

He said the bloc must treat the situation as an immediate responsibility and called on member states to take a united stand to help resolve the conflict, which continues to destabilise the region and cause human suffering.

"So, we will have to speak up. We will have to take action.

"Of course, we welcome Europe, America, China and others. They can come and help.

"But this is Asean's responsibility. It is an immediate task for

neighbouring countries," he said.

Meanwhile, Anwar said Timor-Leste's position in Asean could gain stronger footing over the next five years, with Malaysia championing the country's full membership.

He said that while meeting Asean's core membership requirements, particularly those under the economic pillar, remained a challenge for Timor-Leste, there had been clear political will and commitment

from Dili.

"I believe this view is shared by many of us, which means that within the next five years, Timor-Leste's position could become much more secure," he said.

He said that Malaysia, together with other Asean members, had maintained engagement with Timor-Leste's leaders, including President José Ramos-Horta and Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, to support their institutional preparedness.