

NEARLY SIX DECADES OF PROSPERITY

PM: ASEAN'S STABILITY MUST BE CONSTANTLY RENEWED

Anwar tells members to deepen cooperation for lasting peace

KUALA LUMPUR

THE relative peace and prosperity that Asean has enjoyed for nearly six decades is not self-

sustaining, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the region's stability must be renewed through cooperation and strengthened by a shared sense of purpose.

"That is why Asean is deepening economic links, widening trade and enhancing competitiveness," he said at the opening ceremony of the 47th Asean Summit and Related Summits here yesterday.

Anwar said the upgraded Asean Trade in Goods Agreement (Atiga), to be launched during the summit, would create a more seamless regional market and unlock greater opportunities for businesses and workers.

"The upgrade of Atiga will create a more integrated market, unlocking scale, efficiency and opportunity for our businesses and workers.

"The new Asean Power Grid Financing Facility will also bridge funding gaps and accelerate our transition towards cleaner, more secure energy," he said.

He said that Asean was advanc-

ing the Asean Blue Economy Framework and the Regional Electric Vehicle Ecosystem, which will lay the foundation for sustainable industry and green growth across the region.

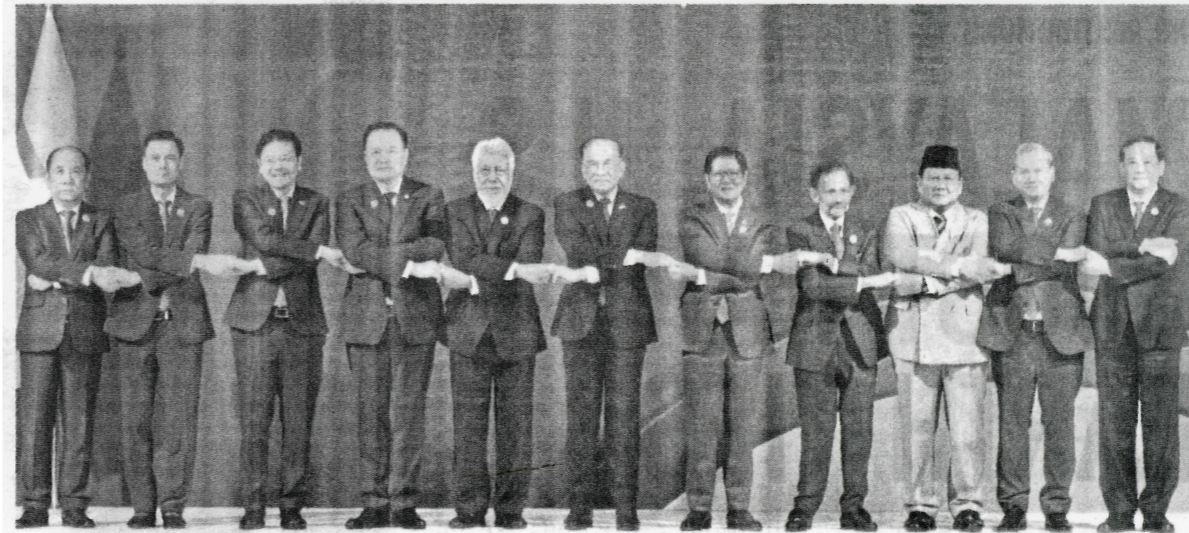
Asean has also agreed to fast-track the Asean Digital Economy Framework Agreement by 2026, following projections that the bloc's digital economy will double to US\$2 trillion by 2030.

"And to ensure technology remains our servant, not our master, we will establish the Asean AI Safety Network (AI SAFE), to embed ethics, safety and sound governance in the use of artificial intelligence," Anwar said.

He said that rising protectionism and shifting supply chains served as a reminder that Asean's resilience depended on adaptability.

"Asean must not stand still. We must have the courage to forge new partnerships and the foresight to deepen existing ones," he said, adding that Malaysia had earlier hosted the second Asean-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) and Asean-GCC-China Summits.

Today, Asean will convene the fifth Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Leaders' Summit to advance what Anwar described as "the



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim with Asean leaders posing for a photograph at the plenary session of the 47th Asean Summit in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. AFP PIC

world's largest free-trade area to its full potential".

Anwar welcomed Brazil and South Africa, guests of the chair, to the 20th East Asia Summit, marking what he called "an important step in widening Asean's engagement with the BRICS and G20 (Group of 20), and strengthening the bloc's bridge to the Global South".

He said Malaysia's chairmanship of Asean this year came at a defining moment, as the world faced mounting geopolitical and economic uncertainty.

"The year 2025 is one that demands more, as the old order is no longer certain and the new one yet to be defined. Leadership is never a matter of routine; it is a matter of choice — to define priorities, renew Asean's sense of purpose and chart a course worthy of our peoples' hopes."

Turning to the conflict in Myanmar, Anwar said lasting peace there "must be Myanmar-owned and Myanmar-led".

"Together with fellow member states, we have worked to foster the conditions for peace in Myanmar.

"Guided by the Five-Point Consensus, Asean has drawn on ev-

ery available channel and partner to reduce violence and ease the humanitarian crisis. But lasting peace cannot be imposed — it must come from within," he said.

Myanmar's military-led government recently announced that elections would be held in phases starting Dec 28, with results expected by the end of January.

Earlier this month, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan visited Myanmar for dis-

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ussions with the country's leaders following reported violations of the ceasefire agreement.

Meanwhile, Anwar said that Asean's enduring strength lies not in uniformity, but in its commitment to respect, dialogue and mutual understanding — values exemplified by the peace agreement between Thailand and Cambodia.

"Amid trials, Asean endures. Our strength lies not in uniformity, but in the conviction that respect and reason still bind us together," he said.

He said the signing of the Kuala Lumpur Accord — a formal ceasefire agreement between Thailand and Cambodia — would demonstrate what such conviction could achieve.

"It reminds us that reconciliation is not a concession, but an act of courage, and that peace, once chosen, can reshape the future of nations," Anwar said.

The signing, witnessed by United States President Donald Trump and Anwar yesterday, formalised the ceasefire agreed upon in July and established an Asean Observer Team to monitor the border area.

During Anwar's opening remarks at the plenary session of the summit, he extended his condolences to Thailand on the passing of Queen Mother Sirikit.

"On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the Thai royal family and people.

"Special thanks to Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul for travelling to Malaysia for this summit and the peace accord signing," he said.

Anwar welcomed Timor-Leste Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao to his first full-fledged Asean Summit as the country prepares for full membership in the bloc.

He said Malaysia's leadership of Asean this year was focused on strengthening the bloc's unity, resilience and global relevance amid shifting international dynamics.

"The future of Asean will not be written by circumstance.

"It will be written by choice — by the choices we make today," Anwar said.