

Now more than ever, regional cooperation is crucial

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KUALA LUMPUR: In a world increasingly shaped by fluctuating tariffs and evolving trade policies, there is a critical need for regional cooperation, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the world needs a renewed commitment to fairness and results in global trade, not more rhetoric.

"Tariffs, restrictions and fluid trade policies are reshaping global supply chains. Such turbulence reminds us of the importance of resilience, agility and regional cooperation," he said.

"Malaysia believes that amidst this uncertainty, Asean must con-

tinue to embody the principles of openness and unity.

"The region has become a crucial link in the global supply chain, a hub for manufacturing, and a vibrant market of 680 million people. Within five years, Asean is expected to become the fourth-largest economy in the world.

"Malaysia's aspiration is clear: we aim to strengthen our role as a trusted investment hub, while ensuring that local enterprises and start-ups are not left behind.

"This is why the government continues to support SMEs through expanded guarantees and financing facilities, helping them innovate, digitalise and compete confidently in global markets," he said at the GoTrade

Summit 2025 here yesterday.

It was hosted by DHL Group in collaboration with the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade).

The event, supported by the Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti), is being held outside of Germany for the first time.

Also present were Miti Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz and DHL Group chief executive officer John Pearson.

Anwar said Malaysia intends to reinforce Asean's central role in guiding the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) during the 5th RCEP Leaders' Meeting next week.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said the RCEP is far

more than an economic arrangement - it is a strategic affirmation that open regionalism remains the pathway to shared prosperity.

"Our priority economic deliverables reflect this conviction. They place MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises), women entrepreneurs and youths at the heart of regional development.

"In advancing this vision of deeper integration, it is timely that Asean, and the world at large, turn their attention to the RCEP, the world's largest trade agreement, encompassing nearly one-third of global GDP and trade.

"We want RCEP to serve not just the interests of large multinational corporations but also to deliver concrete benefits to our SMEs, workers and communities.

"The success of RCEP will depend on our ability to translate commitments into opportunities," said Anwar.

The Prime Minister said through GoTrade, DHL has empowered thousands of MSMEs, including women-owned businesses, to reach global markets and compete with confidence.

Earlier, Tengku Zafrul in his speech said that to build the country's export resilience, SMEs must be transformed into globally competitive firms with niche expertise, homegrown technologies and innovations.

"But we cannot do it alone. This must be a whole-of-nation effort and this is where private sector partners like DHL can play their roles," he added.