

# 'Unity, cooperation vital to steer destiny of region'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has urged Asean to prove that unity and reason matter in an era of global upheaval, declaring that the region's destiny "will not be written by circumstance, but by choice."

Opening the 47th Asean Summit in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, he called on member nations to show courage and conviction in defending cooperation amid what he described as "rising contestation and growing uncertainty" worldwide.

"Leadership is never a matter of routine, it's a matter of choice - to define priorities, renew Asean's sense of purpose and chart a course worthy of our peoples' hopes," he said in his keynote address to regional leaders and guests.

Anwar said 2025 "asks more of us" adding that with old orders fading and new ones yet to emerge, Asean's collective resolve is more vital than ever.

A highlight of the summit was the signing of a peace agreement between Cambodia and Thailand, which Anwar hailed as proof that reconciliation "is not a concession but an act of courage, and peace, once chosen, can reshape the future of nations."

He said Malaysia, as Asean chair, has sought to realign the bloc's priorities to keep it "resilient, relevant and responsive to the times".

Reaffirming the region's commitment to resolving the Myanmar crisis, Anwar said Asean remains guided by the Five Point Consensus, adding that lasting peace "cannot be imposed" but must be "Myanmar-owned and Myanmar-led"

"The relative peace and prosperity that Asean has enjoyed for nearly six decades are not self-sustaining. They must be renewed through cooperation and strengthened by shared purpose."

Among the summit's key milestones are the upgraded Asean Trade in Goods Agreement, which aims to create a more seamless regional market, and the new Asean Power Grid Financing Facility to accelerate cleaner and more secure energy access.

Anwar also outlined new regional initiatives, including the Asean Blue Economy Framework, Regional Electric Vehicle Ecosystem and the fast-tracked Asean Digital Economic Framework Agreement targeted for completion by 2026.

He said to ensure responsible innovation, Asean would also launch the Asean AI Safety Network, or AI SAFE, to embed ethics, safety and good governance in artificial intelligence use.

"Rising protectionism and shifting supply chains remind us that resilience depends on adaptability.

"Asean endures. Our task is to keep faith in cooperation and to prove that in this divided age, understanding and dialogue can still prevail." - By **KIRTINEE RAMESH** and **HARITH KAMAL**