

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS YAB PRIME MINISTER AT THE ASEAN
FUTURE FORUM 2025, HANOI**

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BY THE HONOURABLE ANWAR IBRAHIM

PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

26 FEBRUARY 2025

Good morning, selamat pagi, Chào buổi sáng [chow-bui-sang].

1. Expressing my personal encounter with Vietnam, i grew up in the generation, unlike Prime Minister Luxon, who is much younger, at the height of the struggle for liberation of vietnam. And we were very

supportive, we were that generation. They kept on with that slogan, “ho ho ho, Ho Chi Minh”. (audio terputus)

2. That spread all over the region, the sentiment in support, in appreciation, love and affection for the indomitable spirit and the struggle of the Vietnamese people. And I’ve said to Prime Minister that in the next visit I would love to go to the Dien Bien Phu, because there’s a symbol of the brilliance, guerrilla warfare and strategy of relatively small military force defeating the colonial giant.
3. Unfortunately, i’m not able to make it this time because Malaysian Parliament is in session and i do want to give an opportunity for the opposition to question that the Prime Minister wants to spend his time abroad.
4. Anyway, thank you again, so I must, I don’t need to apologize, but at least to appeal to you to bear with me that every time I get to Vietnam, I get this sort of a spirit of this new vigour, vitality and congratulations, Prime Minister, you have even surpassed Malaysia into your phenomenal growth of 7% and great strides and you started actually the much lower threshold.
5. We were much independent much earlier. We started all these semiconductors and industrialization much earlier, but in the short span, Vietnam has shown your relentless economic and food security, technology, industrialization and able to navigate first class

diplomatic relations. As I mentioned to him, although I technically in this position as chairman of ASEAN, but I think, diplomatic skills, I have to learn from Pham Minh Chinh.

6. So, thank you also to Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam for convening the second series of ASEAN Future Forum. Vietnam is again, as I said, a remarkable success story that showcases how a country's initial poverty is now stumbling to wealth creation and economic growth; correct policy prescription, strong in governance, in anti-corruption measures to promote a progressive modern economy. And we have seen this remarkable success in terms of poverty eradication and uplifting wealth of the masses.
7. But we are now in the geopolitical inflection point, various global disruptions that we have experienced in the last decade are the new normal, highlighting the fragility of the global order and existing structures that underpin it. That's precisely the reason why such forums are not only relevant but very critical to get the great minds in the region to reflect and share their views. Now, divergences may be economic, historical, geological, security driven.
8. Some have ceased on by populists for their own ends. Many are deeply sobering and have brought for ___ consequential effects not only to regional peace and prosperity, but also the well-being of the people of Southeast Asia.

9. In this era of division and rivalry, ASEAN must shine as a beacon of hope, fostering a sustainable, harmonious and economically dynamic region. I've said it in my encounters throughout the world and my dear friend Ram Swartha, we at least between Malaysia and Vietnam and many of our friends would certainly hope to welcome you this year as a full member of ASEAN.
10. We often hear calls for ASEAN to strengthen and reinforce its centrality to continue exercising its agency and strategic autonomy. However, ASEAN must always be bear in mind, the centrality is not a right but a privilege. There has to be earned and re-earned in the context of changing contingencies. Our centrality counts for little when there is no cohesion among member states, when we let internal differences and priorities divide us.
11. That's why I reiterate, we are very fortunate because we are in the region which is the most peaceful in the world and where the region which is fastest growing economy in the world and our relations between leaders like my personal relations with Prime Minister, I mean, Chinh and many of my colleagues in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Brunei, for example, I outstanding, we have this direct exchanges.
12. Sometimes it would be too much, particularly from Prime Minister, Pham Minh Chinh maybe too much, but that is the price of a strong board of relationship and brotherhood. So I thank you very much Prime Minister. I told him we are in the midst of a very important debate in Parliament. I appealed to him, I said Parliament is in the

full session and there still was the end but he said “no Anwar, you are Chairman of ASEAN, you are my friend and brother, you have to come.” So he just instructs friends like that. What choice do I have? So thank you but that reflects that sort of comradeship which I think without exaggeration is unrivalled elsewhere as a regional grouping based on working together and trust and one thing to enrich one another.

13. We discussed the issues and areas where Vietnam excel and some areas that we excel and our decision was to share. Timor-Leste which is comes, I mean much later and we say, look, we’ll work together and assist them. Facilitate the entry, accelerate the process and that is the spirit. I think that is a bond which we will ship and we say insya-Allah (God willing) the future of ASEAN. That’s why we say no country should be left behind when we talk about energy transition, we talk about digitalization, we are talking about the Asean community.
14. While raising the regional floor on economic development is vital, we must also strive to elevate the developmental ceiling of our region. Building a robust and resilient supply chain ecosystem within the region is imperative to withstand looming geostrategic challenges. This requires ASEAN to adopt a new model of trade integration – one that aligns with global trends toward environmental sustainability.
15. Markets in developed nations are increasingly prioritising sustainability, and ASEAN must adapt to such trends to maintain its relevance in global trade. This calls for measuring, reporting, and verifying the environmental footprint of products that crosses our

borders. Such initiatives will not only enhance our trade competitiveness but also encourage greater private sector investment in green economy transformations.

16. Malaysia, guided by the Malaysia MADANI framework, stands ready to lead the charge for renewed efforts in green investments, ranging from regenerative agriculture, solar energy, electric vehicles, and green infrastructure.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

17. As we advance ASEAN's agenda in this new age of uncertainty, we must also remain vigilant to possible rising geopolitical risks that could impact ASEAN's trajectory. The ongoing trade tensions between the United States and China, including policies like recent tariffs imposed by Washington, and its counter-tariffs by those on the receiving end, present both opportunities and challenges for our region.
18. While some might argue that ASEAN could benefit as global supply chains recalibrate and seek diversification, the reality is far more complex. The question remains: can ASEAN truly capitalise on these shifts, or will we be caught in the crossfire of great power rivalry? In either case, we must ensure that any gains from investment and trade be distributed equitably among our member states and not exacerbate existing disparities.

19. Furthermore, we must remain cautious of possible over-dependence on any one market or industry, which could leave us vulnerable to external shocks. ASEAN's strength lies in its ability to unify, gel together through dialogue and act as a cohesive economic bloc, leveraging its collective potential to navigate future uncertainties.
20. Given the present and future realities that we face, Malaysia has adopted the theme of "Inclusivity and Sustainability" with a deliberate view toward a future-oriented network.
21. It is a theme that finds great resonance with this conference and reflects a pivotal moment in history for both ASEAN and the world at large, a moment marked by profound uncertainty and rapid change. It is also deeply significant as ASEAN forges ahead into an era where solidarity and collaboration are paramount in addressing shared challenges and harnessing emerging opportunities.
22. I believe that ASEAN stands on the precipice of renewal and transformation, underpinned by a vision of shared progress, prosperity and justice. We are no longer a bystander in global affairs but a dynamic and influential force driving positive change. And I could not agree more with Prime Minister Chính, where he described that ASEAN is a region of "incredible vitality".

Thank you, terima kasih, cảm ơn [kam en].

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