

**OPENING ADDRESS BY YAB PRIME MINISTER FOR 58TH ASEAN
FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING**

By : DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

Venue : KUALA LUMPUR

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YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM

PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

FOR

58TH ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

9 JULY 2025, KUALA LUMPUR

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan salam sejahtera.

YB Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hassan,

Menteri Luar Negeri selaku pengerusi sidang;

YAB Dato' Sri Haji Fadillah bin Haji Yusof,

Timbalan Perdana Menteri;

Menteri-menteri;

Rakan-rakan;

Menteri-menteri ASEAN;

Tuan-tuan Yang Terutama; dan

Saudara saudari yang dimuliakan.

1. Satu penghormatan lagi kepada Malaysia tatkala mempengerusikan ASEAN tahun ini dan menyelenggara sidang utama hari ini. Kerana

di sinilah tapak untuk kita kembangkan perbincangan pada bulan Oktober nanti. Izinkan saya untuk menyatakan bahawa kekuatan ASEAN inilah jaminan keamanan, kekuatan ASEAN ini jaminan pertumbuhan ekonomi, dan kekuatan ini juga diharapkan untuk menjaga kepentingan rakyat ASEAN keseluruhannya.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

2. May I begin and seek your indulgence to express my personal feelings and concern as I also expressed to my friends, Foreign Ministers this morning. That is from the most senior leaders in ASEAN to the present, we have achieved thus far due to the level of trust, friendship amongst leaders and I believe Foreign Ministers too. The more contentious issues like Myanmar, the Five-Point Consensus, whether to be able to meet Prime Minister Military Junta and NUG Prime Minister. When we discussed with the leaders, without exception, full of support and confidence shown.
3. Similarly, after the event, we were able to engage again to seek a common platform, understanding how to proceed. Even the unfortunate incidents recently between Cambodia and Thailand, which of course most leaders, all ASEAN leaders do express some concern. But we had no inhibition at all to immediately call our colleagues in both countries to express our concern and to support all endeavor's initiative to secure a lasting peace. We have gone through phases to ensure relative success of ASEAN, including areas that we think have faced some limitations like inter-ASEAN trade, joint

investments. But we have done relatively well because again, I must reiterate the level of trust and confidence that we have for ourselves.

4. I've just returned as you know from Rio, I was in Italy, France before that. Without exception, meeting leaders, of course, bilateral sessions, in Malaysia, but without exception, they all asked about ASEAN. Everyone has recognized the role of ASEAN. ASEAN now has come and achieved a spectacular position, major respect and recognition internationally and I must thank you all and particularly the Foreign Ministers.
5. So, welcome officially to Kuala Lumpur for the 58th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting. We are at the moment where we have to make courageous choices about ASEAN's priorities, our voice in the world, how we shape the region between now and 2045. So again, thank you to the Foreign Ministers, leaders for the trust shown to us this year and next year to the Philippines. And I've assured President Bongbong Marcos that this part of our endeavour will give all the necessary support and cooperation to ensure the success.
6. ASEAN, as reflected by Foreign Minister Mohamad Hassan, was not born of ease. It was forged in complexity by nations that understood the perils of division and the promise of dialogue.
7. Yet we have persevered and preserved peace and expanded prosperity in ways few regions can equal. We did so by nurturing a habit of

cooperation, a willingness to keep engaging even when the past was difficult and the present testing.

8. Our region's strength therefore lies not in the absence of tension, but in our commitment to manage it through mutual respect, continuous dialogue and the search for consensus. That is the ASEAN way – it must remain our guide.
9. We also look forward to welcoming Timor-Leste as our newest Member State in October. Malaysia has long supported this aspiration, and we are heartened by the progress made. I thank again the Secretariat for facilitates and I urge all Member States to continue supporting Timor-Leste's path to full integration – not only into our institutions, but into our shared vision for the region's future.
10. Above all, ASEAN Centrality must be our North Star, as reflected in the continuous strengthening and innovation of ASEAN-led institutions. We must remain the region's primary anchor for dialogue in as much as our Dialogue Partners must continue to find value in engaging with us.
11. Foreign Minister YB Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan is complaining, saying it was a headache because everywhere we go, leaders want to at least participate. If they cannot join, they want to participate. So, I said, "please persuade your colleagues, the Foreign Ministers, that we will have likely, we are very likely to have President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa and President Lula da Silva of Brazil

wanting to join at least representing their regions. That is, I am just giving suggestion. The problem is for the Foreign Ministers to them facilitate. That is why you are here today. Now you see that level of understanding confidence is unheard of and it's not the pattern observed by many other regions.

12. And, I am very proud, I am not exaggerating, but I am extremely delighted to be able to contribute and participate with the level of support and trust and friendship shown by all these countries and their leaders. And therefore, please convey my respects to your respective leaders and governments and wish them well and continue to engage and ensure that the success of ASEAN in the future is rest assured.
13. This meeting takes place amid the unravelling of assumptions – where power unsettles principle, and calm can no longer be taken for granted.
14. The global order is fraying. Conflict, coercion, and mistrust now define too many relationships – and countless lives are being lost or overturned in their wake.
15. In Gaza and Palestine, we witness the unrelenting suffering of an entire people, denied dignity and justice across generations. In Ukraine, war grinds on. Across parts of Africa, violence continues to displace and devastate. And in Myanmar, regrettably, peace remains elusive, even as suffering deepens.

16. We are also deeply troubled by mounting tensions in the Middle East, where the actions of one state against its neighbours threaten to spark a wider regional conflagration. The risks are profound for energy security, global stability and the integrity of international law.
17. The multilateral system cannot endure if its principles are upheld only when convenient. ASEAN must be among those who choose to stand for rules, even when others choose retreat. Realism and values are not opposing forces. We need both to guide our choices and to defend what matters.

Ministers and excellencies,

18. Power has always shaped trade. But today, it increasingly defines it. Across the world, tools once used to generate growth are now wielded to pressure, isolate and contain. Tariffs, export restrictions, and investment barriers have now become the sharpened instruments of geopolitical rivalry. This is no passing storm. It is the new weather of our time.
19. ASEAN must confront this reality with clarity and conviction. We must read the landscape clinically, speak with coherence, and act with foresight. Our cohesion must not end at declarations. It must be built into our institutions, our strategies and our economic decisions.

20. I therefore urge even closer alignment between ASEAN's foreign and economic policy tracks. Our Foreign and Economic Ministers must move in concert in facing challenges.
21. This imperative is fully aligned with ASEAN's Vision 2045, which calls for greater synergy across pillars and sectors. We must build habits of coordination that match the realities we confront.
22. And as we navigate external pressures, we need to fortify our internal foundations. Trade more among ourselves, invest more in one another, and advance integration across sectors with resolve. To build a stronger, more connected ASEAN economy is a strategic imperative that will anchor our relevance and resilience for decades to come.
23. We must also reject the idea that the world can be carved into spheres of influence, and that decisions about our region can be made elsewhere. We are a region that charts its own course deliberately, coherently, and with purpose. ASEAN will not be spoken for in absentia.

Ministers and excellencies,

24. As global conditions remain uncertain, there is no overstressing the need to act with purpose in our own region by advancing cooperation that delivers tangible benefits to our people. ASEAN will continue to focus on practical collaboration: connectivity, food security, digital

transformation, education, public health, and climate resilience. These efforts take shape in the quiet determination of a mother in Batambang, preparing her stall as dawn breaks over the city. They endure in the steady hands of a farmer in Central Luzon, tending the land that has sustained generations. And they shine in the hopeful eyes of a child in Chiang Rai, walking to school with dreams of the future.

25. From Sittwe to Merauke, from Da Nang to Dili, our region can become more peaceful and more prosperous, if we have the courage to see ASEAN not as nations moving in parallel, but as one community moving with purpose.
26. This is where ASEAN proves its worth not in communiqués, but in outcomes that strengthen our region and serve our people.
27. So let this meeting reaffirm our conviction: that ASEAN will remain coherent, resilient and respected.
28. And with that, I declare the 58th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting officially open.

Terima kasih.

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