

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY YAB PRIME MINISTER AT THE 38TH
ASIA-PACIFIC ROUNDTABLE (APR)**

By : DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

Venue : HILTON HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

Date : 19/06/2025

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YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM

PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

AT THE

38th ASIA-PACIFIC ROUNDTABLE (APR)

19th JUNE 2025 (THURSDAY) | 9:00AM

HILTON HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan salam Sejahtera.

Yang Berhormat Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan,

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia;

Yang Berbahagia Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia;

Excellencies Ambassadors;

**Yang Berbahagia Datuk Profesor Mohd Faiz Abdullah,
Chairman,**

Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia.

1. Adalah satu penghormatan sekali lagi untuk bersama dalam sidang Antarabangsa berpangkalan kepada ASEAN dengan ISIS. Untuk menjadikannya wacana yang segar. Kita saling bergantung, ASEAN agak kukuh kohesif sebagai satu kumpulan kerana kita meneruskan wacana yang segar.
2. Dan kita tahu bahawa dalam kemelut dunia, perdagangan dan konflik geopolitik antarabangsa, kekuatan rantau itu menjadi paksi. Bagi kita kembangkan ekonomi dengan menjamin kestabilan politik.
3. Kebijaksanaan ASEAN ialah dapat mempertahankan suatu pendirian yang sederhana. Mempunyai hubungan yang akrab dengan semua rantau dan tidak mengambil pendekatan yang keras kerana hubungan antarabangsa itu menjadi sesuatu paksi dan landasan yang kukuh dan Menteri Luar Negeri Yang Berhormat Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan yang sepatutnya menyampaikan pandangan ini kerana beliau lebih arif dan selalu memantau saya, takut saya memberikan gambaran yang agak melanggar pendirian ASEAN dan Kementerian Luar selama ini.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

4. Today we stand as witnesses to an international order mired in crisis and uncertainty, swept by the tides of major power rivalry, strained by geo-economic pressures and increasingly challenged by non-traditional security issues.

5. These are not unfamiliar to us, yet their impact, especially here in Southeast Asia, has never been so acutely felt. It has compelled us to reassess our strategic outlooks, revisit our national priorities and navigate the growing complexities of our relationships.
6. We find ourselves at a pivotal juncture. Will we remain bystanders as the world reconfigures itself or will we choose to be agents of change? Do we reassess long standing alliances of friendships or do we reaffirm multilateral cooperation in the service of humanity?
7. Now, ASEAN has laid a solid foundation that has guided us through disputes and crises with its sovereignty and border issues, the scourge of pandemics or climate disasters. It has anchored our economic integration through initiatives like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the coming future, the Digital Economic Framework Agreement.
8. We will continue to place our trust in ASEAN's founding principles and its enduring potential, but we must go further in strengthening our collective resolve.
9. Now, I'm fortunate to chair with excellent establishing relations with the King, President and Prime ministers throughout ASEAN. The most contentious issues even me and Myanmar when I decided to meet both the SEC Prime Minister, Senior General and also NUG Prime Minister. When I engage with leaders, there was immediately

some consensus, immediate peace, ceasefire and unrestrained humanitarian assistance.

10. So, through excellencies, ambassadors and commissioners may I express my profound thanks. I would not be able to deal with it, do this without their total support and trust. And this is something which I consider a remarkable feat in terms of bilateral and international relations.
11. I'm leaving now to Johor and I've often reiterated this point that it's hardly any country that I know of in terms of bilateral relations where you have two countries based on trust and commitment to uplift the living conditions of both countries establish that Joint Johor Singapore Economic Zone.
12. And similarly, with the border with Thailand, we're working endlessly to forge its new understanding economic relationship to ensure that the poorer provinces in the south of Thailand and the poor provinces in the north of Malaya can work together to build this economic relationship that could propel growth and therefore resolve some of the outstanding issues.
13. So, we still continue to have border disputes. I'm not highlighting too much about Cambodia or Thailand now because as you know, Malaysia is a maritime country. We have border issues to all countries. But that's not stopped us from focusing on our priorities, excellent bilateral relations, peace and security, working together in

all issues, economic, cultural, political, education and I think that should be the way forward.

14. So, Malaysia in that sense is fortunate when we assume the ASEAN chairmanship this year, we are able to explore and expand this horizon. But this year is of course, a year of significance not only for our region but our shared hopes and aspirations.
15. Now, as agents of change, our rule must not merely reflect ASEAN's values, but we must attempt to shape them. We must confront the hot truth about our regional architecture, renew our commitment to share responsibilities, and strengthen cooperation beyond just rhetoric.
16. We are preparing for a world wrought with challenges and must enhance regional integration. With respect to American Ambassador, I still use enhance and not enhance. No, this sense of jokes, Ambassador Kagan, because when I used to teach Georgetown and every time I say enhance, they will smile. It sounds, you know, exciting to the students. I mean, because it's 'enhanced' or 'water please'. They will correct my English. They said enhance, Sir, and water, please. Oh, not easy to deal with American guys.
17. So, the challenge must be to enhance regional integration, develop additional economic ties and tap future catalyst of growth, including digital transformation, the exponential surge of artificial intelligence and energy transition. And again, during the last ASEAN meeting

with Vietnam and I understand Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Singapore were able to decide and force through this ASEAN power grid phenomenal feat and progress in terms of having this alternative energy and the ASEAN power grid.

18. We are working again towards upgrading existing trade agreements among member states and dialogue partners. And I've said this repeatedly, our strength is to secure peace and understanding. Our limitation is the lack of intra ASEAN trade and joint investments, which now has been the new focus of ASEAN leaders and more so in the face of rising protectionism. We must remind ourselves that trade is not a sideshow to security – it is part of the scaffolding that holds the region together. When trade falters, fractures follow.
19. The resounding success of the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit last month, demonstrates not just ASEAN's convening power, but also our keen focus on leveraging economic synergies and building institutional collaboration.
20. The conclusion of the Digital Economic Framework Agreement will unlock the enormous potential of the region's digital economy. More importantly, the increased intra-regional connectivity will open up new opportunities for local businesses to expand their reach across the region.
21. As the world moves toward embracing a greener and more sustainable economy, ASEAN continue to adapt to better leverage on

opportunities and partnerships. We are doubling down on energy transition and better practices such as the development of sustainable investment guidelines and the ASEAN Power Grid.

22. Beyond its economic potential, sustainable development is an urgent task because of the adverse impacts of climate change towards people's livelihoods. A truly people-centered ASEAN can only be achieved with a greener and more resilient region.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

23. There are the spectres looming around us – great-power rivalry, gross inequality in countries and in the region, transnational crime and territorial disputes. The path ahead is to close ranks and act in unison in facing these challenges so that they do not weaken ASEAN as a bloc. As we reflect on these lingering challenges, one which a lasting solution remains elusive is the civil war in Myanmar.
24. Malaysia deems it a profound responsibility to mobilise every viable ASEAN mechanism and cooperate with all partners towards the de-escalation of violence, and further down the road, the Myanmar-led and Myanmar-owned peace process.
25. There is an earthquake in Myanmar is a stark reminder that natural disasters do not wait for the semblance of stability when they strike. This was not just another humanitarian crisis – it was a moral test for

all of us in the region and was a remarkable feat when you have Thailand moving immediately to support, we have the SMART team Singapore among the first to reach there. We have Malaysia with its field military field hospital set up in the region. And we have all countries, Philippines, Vietnam all coming to the fore without even having to engage and plan and coordinate. Then we just move with such speed and again, I'm proud to see that, you know, ASEAN has grown and mature enough going there, but still giving that consistent message. No compromise, but must be a ceasefire. No compromise by humanitarian assistance without discrimination, and passing this message, begin inclusive dialogue with all parties.

26. Our actions, therefore must go beyond the transactional; it must be transformative. And so, I continue to implore my colleagues, brothers and sisters, particularly in Myanmar and with ASEAN – to strengthen our collective resolve to work towards a peaceful and resilient Myanmar.
27. Our ministers are there in Washington, D.C. bring up this tariffs issue with the United States. This morning, I received a message from our Minister of MITI and Finance, second Finance Minister, that the meetings with the Secretary of Commerce, US State representatives have been excellent. And we always emphasize the need not only to secure what is fair for Malaysia, but we always present the case for ASEAN.
28. And I've urged my colleagues with ASEAN to do likewise, present the bilateral position, but at the same time emphasize the need for

ASEAN to remain a very cohesive and effective plot. The imposition of unilateral tariffs in the United States is of course, admittedly a significant challenge to our nation and the region as we are deeply plucked into global supply chains. Some may not appreciate the predicament you are facing 60% of our semiconductor E&E products from Malaysia I exported to the United States, 60%.

29. So, we can imagine the concern not only of government, but Malaysians generally, but the need to secure a fair resolution to this issue. Therefore, we remain consistent that we resolve and I must emphasize that the ASEAN consensus reached both by the Finance Minister and the Trade Minister earlier and the Foreign Minister culminating in the final communique by ASEAN leaders. We emphasize the point that the international trade must be governed by transparent rules and legal predictability, not by unilateralism or coercive economic measures.
30. Disruption in trade and supply chain will leave detrimental effects on businesses and hamper economic growth, further impacting efforts towards ensuring the socio-economic well being of the people. That said, Malaysia will continue to engage constructively with the United States, China and the European Union, India and others in advancing our national and regional interests. And let there be no doubt: Malaysia's strategy of active non-alignment is a deliberate and principled framework designed to maximize strategic flexibility, preserve decision making autonomy and engage all partners on our terms.

31. Over the past two years, Malaysia has reached out to like-minded partners in the Global South to bridge regions, build collective resolve and promote shared prosperity. Our focus is clear, pragmatic, coordinated and action-oriented cooperation.
32. It is in this spirit that we have revitalized our pursuit of greater inter regional connectivity and cooperation. It has been a catalyst not only for our efforts in Global South mobilization, but in encouraging greater coordination with the Global North in this endeavor.
33. The recent reinvigoration of BRICS to include members and partner countries from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Africa and South America is the very essence of bridging regions. It is an opportunity to build new partnerships and renew old ones. Malaysia looks forward to collaborating his partner country and finding new avenues of niche area of cooperation.
34. Contrary to reductionist perspectives on why several South Asian countries are engaging in BRICS, it is neither about taking sides nor moving away from the West. It is a manifestation of agency, autonomy and the trust in sustained cooperation to address shared challenges.
35. Yet again, events in the Middle East have made it patently clear how the tables of diplomacy could be instantly overturned by the fury of calculated violence. The incessant, punitive and unprovoked Israeli strikes on Iranian territory, undertaken even as crucial talks were

under way, are certainly aimed at shattering the possibility of dialogue itself.

36. We are for effective engagement. We are for unconditional peace in the region because if we allow actions carried out with utter impunity, violating international law and eroding the norms that hold global order together to be, we will of course have a bleak future for all of us. Therefore, we have to have the courage to call on those with power and influence to speak plainly and act decisively to restrain further escalation. And of course, in Gaza, people do ask me why do I continue to repeat this? It's far distant land, but the verifications here. It was pervasive, from the urban to the rural areas. The people expect us to voice out to take steps, of course. Some even call for extreme measures.
37. The most we need to do is of course, to voice our concerns, to call for sanity to prevail, because the relentless assault that continues against defenseless population and exacting a toll of human suffering just defies comprehension. Not a staggering civilian casualty that we see every day. Overwhelmingly, women and children. Demand far more than pious proclamations of concern. They require concerted international action to uphold humanitarian law, secure an immediate ceasefire and ensure the unfettered delivery of aid to those in desperate need. The credibility of the so-called ruled or rules-based order is on trial.
38. And of course, to our West, the unresolved tensions between Pakistan and India remain a delicate fault line. Their future hinges not only on

all grievances but also on present choices whether to invest in stability or to continue aging towards the cusp of catastrophes.

39. Elsewhere in the Asia Pacific, the same pressures play out with different scripts. In the Taiwan Straits, the Korean Peninsula, in the South China Sea, familiar flash points flicker. And the ASEAN is also clear in terms of our strong position against the continued display of arrogance and by the North Korean regime. So here, as ever, we must insist on the primacy of dialogue over disruption, over of law, over disorder, of restraint over escalation.
40. Malaysia believes the future of this region lies not in hardened blocs of fragile balances, but in a security architecture that is inclusive, predictable, one in which active dawn alignment is not merely tolerated but enabled to thrive.
41. While we do not pretend to be able to reshape the region to fit our ideals, we can act to prevent worse outcomes. Stability is not guaranteed, but neither is chaos inevitable. What we do now, how we manage tensions, balance relationships and defend our interests will decide how the region weathers the storms ahead.

Terima kasih, thank you.

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