



PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
'TOWARDS ASEAN SUSTAINABLE DIGITAL FUTURE'**

**ASEAN BUSINESS INVESTMENT SUMMIT 2021
25 OCTOBER 2021**

(SALUTATIONS)

BISMILLAHIRRAHMAANIRRAHIM

**Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh
and Salam Keluarga Malaysia.**

- 1. Honourable Dr. Ar. Siti Rozaimeriyanty Haji Abd
Rahman,
Chair of ASEAN Business Advisory Council 2021**

- 2. Ms. Haslina Taib,
Chair of ASEAN Business and Investment Summit
2021**

- 3. Heads of Governments and States of ASEAN**

- 4. Dialogue Partners**

- 5. Business and Thought Leaders of ASEAN**

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is an honour to share my aspiration in steering **ASEAN Towards Sustainable Digital Future** at the **ASEAN Business Investment Summit 2021** with you today. This particular topic holds a special importance in the current global economic scenario, as governments across the world are working towards building a sustainable digital future.
2. A defining feature of the COVID-19 pandemic is digital transformation. Of which, has filled every aspect of our lives besides altering economic, social and structural domains. This pandemic has led to the rise of digital technologies, by which have supported governments and businesses in adopting agile and adaptive responses.
3. In this regard, almost all of the ASEAN countries have introduced digital tools for disseminating information, monitoring healthcare and sustaining education continuance. Additionally, businesses continue exploring digital financing, e-platform and promote gig-economy. This digital economic growth worldwide had been estimated to reach USD455 billion by the year 2023.
4. While we can agree that digital integration has enabled ASEAN to harness its collective competitiveness in the global economy and foster domestic growth, **divergences** in technological readiness and connectivity remain **elusive**. We cannot disregard the speed and scale of changes that have implicated our society, of which in due process had widened inequalities across nations.

Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

INCLUSIVE DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

5. The essential question - how do we harness these technologies for future preparation of our businesses and people, while cushioning disruptive transitions? Thus, we need to reshape our digital ecosystem in a way that ensures inclusive, sustainable and resilient growth. On this note, allow me to share three key points of suggested resolutions.
6. **FIRST**, by building inclusive digital infrastructure. It is imperative for every ASEAN states to foster a truly accessible and affordable digital infrastructure for all. In this **vein**, Malaysia has taken efforts to improve the foundational infrastructure, with the launching of Malaysian Digital Blueprint (or MyDIGITAL) initiative early this year in tandem with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (or 4-i-R).
7. Our aim is to transform the nation into a digitally-enabled, technology-driven high-income economy, while enhancing digital infrastructure for seamless and extensive connectivity. This aspiration is currently being actualised by the National Digital Network (or JENDELA) action plan, with an allocation of approximately USD6.7 billion.
8. It was aimed at improving broadband quality and coverage while paving the way to 5G technology. These initiatives will enable Malaysia to enhance the preparedness of the nation as well as catalysing a conducive ecosystem for an innovative economy.

Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

INCLUSIVE DIGITAL LITERACY

9. **SECOND, by promoting inclusive digital literacy.** To this effect, Malaysia has emphasised on developing future-ready digital talents as one of the outlined strategies under our recently tabled Twelfth Malaysia Plan.
10. Under the Plan, continuous measures in up-skilling and re-skilling digital literacy will be undertaken in ensuring relevancy of workforce at all times.
11. Malaysia is consistently expanding industrial trainings, which include Technical and Vocational Education Training, Research and Development, as well as Commercialization and Innovation.
12. All of those efforts are meant to develop a more digitally-ready talent among Malaysians. Through this whole-of-society approach, we firmly believed that more people will be able to equip and upgrade themselves with the necessary skills for inclusive growth.
13. On the other hand, a persistent gap in digital skills across ASEAN region could eventually be brought closer. This is essential for better cooperation and prosperity amongst ASEAN states, considering facts that some ASEAN members are having more than 90% of digital penetration, while some only by 40%.

Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

BOOSTING DIGITAL-READY MSMEs

14. **THIRD**, by boosting digital-ready micro, small and medium enterprise (MSMEs). As for this, Malaysia have intensified policy interventions, of which specifically targeted to expand the breadth and depth of digitalisation adoption by our MSMEs.
15. This approach is imperative for Malaysia, as our MSMEs accounted for more than 90% of businesses in ASEAN economies. Without due preparations and measures, we could be among the most hard-hit by the pandemic post repercussion.
16. Therefore, successful adoption of digital technologies are crucial for our consistent revitalisation and sustainable economic recovery. To date, we are thriving consistently in broadening the MSMEs market access, while building an inclusive digital economy.
17. In the light of this Summit, the existing ecosystem of all ASEAN states must also be strengthened, while some areas are in dire need of streamlining on certain policies.
18. Evidently, MSMEs that are lacking in access to technologies are facing greatest risk of being left behind in this post-pandemic era. There is an inevitable urgency of need in boosting digital-ready across ASEAN's MSMEs.

Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

19. Digitalisation and technological innovation have been embedded in the initiatives and action plans, including in some of the Free Trade Agreements. The recently endorsed Bandar Sri Begawan Roadmap has aspired many in propelling ASEAN's transformation into sustainable digital future.
20. This initiative is in accordance with the past Global Survey which had ascertained Asia in becoming a home to the largest number of digital platform companies. In 2016 alone, Asia's market capitalization has reached over USD930 billion, whereas for Southeast Asia by USD7 billion.
21. Therefore, I urge my fellow ASEAN to work closely in ensuring digital technologies will be benefited by all. In achieving such aspiration, the wealth of experience, technological capacity and innovative approach of private sectors could be further consolidated via public policy.
22. I firmly believe that through capitalising on those synergies, we would be able to pave the path for an inclusive digitally-enabled ASEAN in the near future. **On that note, may we all be having fruitful deliberations in advancing Digital ASEAN Business Investment Summit 2021.**

Thank you.

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