



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**YAB DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM  
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA**

**IN CONJUNCTION WITH**

**GALA DINNER FOR THE 57<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN ECONOMIC  
MINISTERS' (AEM) MEETING AND RELATED MEETING**

**24 SEPTEMBER 2025 (WEDNESDAY) | 8.00 PM  
PERDANA BOTANICAL GARDEN  
KUALA LUMPUR**

**Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh, salam sejahtera.**

*Saudara Datuk Seri Utama Tengku Zafrul bin Tengku Aziz,  
Menteri Pelaburan, Perdagangan dan Industri;*

*Menteri-menteri; dan*

*Rakan-rakan yang saya muliakan.*

- 1. Terima kasih atas kehadiran pada malam ini. Sidang ini menemukan pimpinan ekonomi dan juga rakan dialog kita untuk melakar satu dasar yang boleh mengangkat kekuatan ekonomi rantau, khususnya ASEAN dalam mendepani permasalahan dan yang belum terkawal. Tetapi, dengan kesepakatan ASEAN saya percaya kita mampu mengangkat semula kekuatan ekonomi bukan sahaja Malaysia tetapi rantau ini sebagai rantau yang penting, kritikal dalam menghadapi ujian dan yang utamanya, menjadikan kekuatan ekonomi sebagai kekuatan asas.*

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

2. Thank you, Zafrul, fellow ministers and dialogue partners. The economic pillar remains our central and fundamental goal. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn would certainly agree with me. Of course, we have to secure peace in this region. We continue to engage with all partners, but our priority is of course, the economic pillar. So, your steadfast contributions have shaped the ASEAN Economic Community into what it is today. When we launched AEC in 2015, we envisioned a deeply integrated region that is cohesive, competitive and resilient. That vision has guided our journey and it continues to inspire us today.
3. Now ASEAN stands as the world's fifth-largest economy. With the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the upgraded ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement and our ever-deepening linkages, we are poised to become the world's fourth-largest economic bloc by 2030. Together, we are more than the sum of our parts. We are a collective presence that commands both respect and relevance.
4. In such times, ASEAN cannot be a passive observer. We must not only respond, we must lead. Resilience must be built from within by strengthening supply chains,

empowering MSMEs, investing in sustainability and embracing innovation.

5. In this regard, I welcome the proposal to convene the first-ever joint ASEAN Foreign and Economic Ministers' Meeting next month. A good luck. The Economic Ministers normally are very focused on the economy. The Foreign Ministers focus on everything else except the economy. Hopefully, we can get a better understanding in this meeting. The Foreign Ministers not here, so I can get away with such remarks.
6. This is a bold and timely initiative. It signals ASEAN's resolve to address the interlinked challenges of geopolitics and geo-economics with unity and institutionalized coherence. Malaysia is proud to host and support this historic undertaking, and we hope it will chart the shared principles that guide ASEAN's journey in navigating the complex nexus of economic and political realities in the years ahead.
7. I am distracted by the smell of durian, some of you are not yet familiar with, but I would suggest strongly you should try. It's like blue cheese you either like it or hate it. And if you don't like it, they will consider you a bit partially cultured.

So, this is a test of our resolve to introduce ASEAN diplomacy.

8. Now Malaysia remains committed to ensuring that growth is inclusive, that no Member State is left behind, and that the dividends of integration and equitability shared.
9. We also acknowledge the enduring role of our Dialogue Partners. Thank you very much for joining us tonight. It means a lot, and I wouldn't want to overstate this fact, but we in ASEAN always consider the Dialogue Partners as key players to help propel our economy, accelerate, and give essence and meaning to what we mean as expanding our focus, our market, and trade and investments.
10. Now, looking ahead, Timor-Leste's is joining us by the end of October, and their entry into ASEAN will mark another milestone in our journey.
11. Having just returned from addressing the Timor-Leste Parliament this morning, Datuk Seri Utama Tengku Zafrul bin Tengku Aziz is not kind to me at all. No break. Just coming from the airport and changing to a *batik* and he didn't supply me the same batik as the fellow ministers. But their admission into ASEAN will further strengthen the region's unity enhance. The Americans say 'enhance', I

compromise. We say enhance, but I can use ‘enhance’. I wouldn't want to quarrel over there. Enhance our relevance and deepen our resilience in the face of global uncertainties.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

12. ASEAN is not merely a region; it is a region with a promise of boundless potential. Together, let us unlock the potential for our peoples, our partners and generations to come.
  
13. On behalf of the government and the people of Malaysia, I thank you for your presence. We say enjoy the *makan* and the cultural performance. Well, MITI has little to do with it. It is still under Tourism Ministry. So, when I came down here, I wasn't sure. Is this a MITI economic gathering or a tourist sort of exercise? But we are mixed into one, and I hope you enjoy and relax tonight. You deserve this. You work very hard to protect the interests of all people and to help propel our economy.

Thank you very much, *terima kasih*.