



**KEMENTERIAN
PELABURAN, PERDAGANGAN DAN INDUSTRI**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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AT

**THE ASEAN-MALAYSIA BUSINESS FORUM 2024
EMPOWERING MALAYSIA'S FUTURE IN ASEAN:
THE ROLE OF SMEs IN ADVANCING YOUNG
ENTREPRENEURS AND WOMEN IN THE ASEAN
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY**

**9 DECEMBER 2024
DEWAN PERDANA MITI**

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Deputy Minister of MITI

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Secretary General of MITI

YBrs. Encik Syed Nabil Al Jeffri

Organising Chairman of MySKALA

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Senior Government Officials,
Members of the Media
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Introduction

1. In my five years of public service, I have not only witnessed, but also been part of significant economic challenges faced by the country. In the last two years, I have also had the privilege – with my colleagues at MITI - to drive industrial reforms. In the coming year, as Minister of MITI, I again **feel privileged to be driving the Economic Pillar of ASEAN's Economic Community. I look forward to this with great enthusiasm.** I hope all of you sitting in this room – women, youths, public servants, private sector personnel – share that excitement.

Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. Taking on the ASEAN Chairmanship for the fourth time, our theme this time is "Inclusivity and Sustainability." Those values will underscore the outcome-driven economic agenda we will be promoting through ASEAN's Economic Pillar. **Those values represent the urgent needs of our region. Why? Because if Southeast Asia cannot become more inclusive and sustainable, other achievements such as economic prosperity and tech innovation may prove to be empty wins.**

3. So, **Malaysia is determined to ensure the economic wins of regional integration benefit all, including women, youth and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) – all 800 of you sitting here today.** You'd be glad to know that **our intention is to promote the greatest participation from all of you in ASEAN's development next year.** You can contribute to not only **growing Malaysia's economy, but also shaping ASEAN's economic future.**

4. For your information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is leading preparations for the Political-Security Pillar, while **MITI handles the Economic Pillar** and MOTAC focuses on the Social-Cultural Pillar.

ASEAN's Trade and Economic Integration via the Priority Economic Deliverables (PED)

5. Under the Economic Pillar, we have our Priority Economic Deliverables (or PEDs), which will be classified into four main areas: (1) Enhancing Trade and Investment; (2) Creating an Inclusive and Sustainable Pathway; (3) Promoting Integration and Connectivity of Economies; and (4) Building a Digitally Resilient ASEAN.

6. We are the fourth largest economic bloc and ASEAN's GDP is projected to reach US\$4.5 trillion by 2030, **Malaysia's chairmanship is a crucial opportunity to promote deeper integration and resilience. Our proposed PEDs will be instrumental in establishing ASEAN as a global economic leader.** I will touch on several of these PEDs, particularly those that benefit youth, women entrepreneurs, and MSMEs.

7. **Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship also comes at a pivotal time for Malaysia.** I say this because in the past two years, since the start of **the MADANI Government**, we have been **busy with economic, fiscal and industrial reforms.** Many of these efforts are showing results:

- a. **First, target industries – including aerospace, E&E, chemicals, digital economy, and pharmaceutical – now have a clear growth path.** With policies such as the **New Industrial Master Plan 2030, the National Energy Transition Roadmap, the National Semiconductor Strategy and the Green Investment Strategy**, industries have a clear view on which areas they should invest in.

- b. **Second, investments into Malaysia have increased considerably.** In 1H 2024, we approved RM160 billion of investments, up 18% year-on-year. For your information, the implementation rate of our approved investments is over 80%.

- c. **Third, trade, too, has increased - in the first 10 months of 2024, it was up 9.3% year-on-year, to reach RM2.38 trillion.**

- d. **Fourth, for the first three quarters of 2024, Malaysia's GDP is already at 5.2%.**

- e. **Fifth point, our fiscal reforms, such as targeted subsidies and reducing our budget deficit, are already underway.**

8. So, I feel that **there has never been a better time for youths, women and SMEs to position themselves to ride Malaysia's growth trajectory**, which will also ride on ASEAN's growth story.
9. **Why should you care?** Well, for one, **ASEAN is the world's fifth-largest economy**, with a combined GDP of US\$3.7 trillion. ASEAN is projected to grow between **4.5 – 5.5% from 2025 – 2030** and looks set to become the fourth largest economic bloc globally by 2030.
10. If we were to take just **six countries in ASEAN** – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – we see the **fastest rate of year-on-year growth over the past four quarters**. We see strong numbers from a GDP, trade momentum, industrial activity and labour perspectives¹.
11. **For Malaysia** alone, our **manufacturing output grew 4.7% in 2Q 2024, and then 5.6% in the third quarter**. Furthermore, **by 2045, ASEAN's population is expected to exceed 800 million**. This makes ASEAN a highly attractive market to global investors and exporters.

¹ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-asia/southeast-asia-quarterly-economic-review>

12. All this is a BIG deal – particularly in the context of **current geopolitics**, where **major supply chains are seeking out more neutral bases, such as ASEAN!**

ASEAN 2025's Economic Value Proposition

Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. I am happy to share that **our proposed PEDs are designed to attract more investments, trade and industries into the region.** They are also designed to **encourage more intra-ASEAN trade** (which currently stands at 23 – 25%); AND to **ensure more economic participation by youth, women and entrepreneurs,** among others.
14. Through its Chair of ASEAN, as Malaysia further leverages on opportunities from ASEAN's economic integration efforts, all of you sitting here **can** position yourselves to benefit from the various PEDs and initiatives.
15. Firstly, under **Strategic Thrust 1**, we hope to **upgrade Free Trade Agreements (FTA)** within **ASEAN** and with various **key partners such as China and India.** We also propose to initiate an **Economic Cooperation between ASEAN and the GCC countries.**

16. Then, under the **second Strategic Thrust (Creating an Inclusive & Sustainable Pathway)**, deliverables cover areas such as **sustainable investment; climate financing; improved capital markets; Electric Vehicles; energy security**; an ASEAN Centre of Excellence for MSMEs and mineral resources.
17. The **Third Strategic Thrust** will involve **ASEAN's Semiconductor Supply-Chain and Outlook on ASEAN Tourism**.
18. And for the **Fourth Strategic Thrust**, under “**Building a Digitally Resilient ASEAN**”, MITI will work on furthering the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) Negotiations. Other areas include tech start-ups; AI safety in ASEAN; and digital payments.
19. I must clarify that **MITI will be working with various other Ministries and ASEAN Sectoral Bodies** on all these PEDs. So, with the PEDs as our foundation, what will be the **business or positioning opportunities for women, youths, entrepreneurs and MSMEs?**

ASEAN Opportunities for Youth, Women and MSMEs

20. **On women**, MITI and its agencies have been actively engaging women entrepreneurs via various platforms and programmes. In July this year, **MITI launched its “Women in Trade and Industry” initiative**, to boost the capacity of women in the industrial and export sectors.
21. We aim to help Malaysian female entrepreneurs connect to regional entrepreneurs through the **ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs’ Network (AWEN)**. This is a regional network of women-based organizations representing women in all economic sectors in the ASEAN Member States.
22. Additionally, one side event you can look forward to is the **ASEAN Women Economic Summit 2025**, to be organised by MITI and the Women Leadership Forum in **May 2025**. The other one is the **ASEAN-Women Economic Forum in June next year**. We want to ensure that **Malaysian women entrepreneurs will have greater access to opportunities within Malaysia and ASEAN**.
23. As for the **MSMEs**, under Strategic Thrust 2, the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives of Malaysia (KUSKOP) will likely be working on a key initiative for

MSMEs' Green Transition. MITI will support this through its **National Industry ESG Framework (“i-ESG Framework”)** – launched last year – to **guide manufacturing SMEs in producing their first Sustainability Report.**

24. In terms of exports to ASEAN, **MSMEs should take advantage of the various FTAs**, with ASEAN countries, as well as **between ASEAN and other economic regions**, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (**RCEP**). RCEP includes Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. Rest assured, **our agency, MATRADE, is also at hand to guide any MSME or companies wishing to spread their wings regionally.**

25. **As for the youths**, today's event is also largely about you! This is your **opportunity to connect with like-minded youths and professionals who can assist you to go further, particularly within ASEAN. Do volunteer for some of the key ASEAN events that will be staged next year, for exposure and networking to build your careers.**

26. I am sure the women and youths present here today have also connected and networked with the MSMEs. As mentioned, there will be more opportunities next year where all of you can connect.

ASEAN's Strategic Importance & Closing

Ladies and Gentlemen,

27. In closing, allow me to share what our ASEAN founding father, the late YAB Tun Abdul Razak said, when he signed the ASEAN agreement in 1967: “It is important that individually and jointly **we should create a deep awareness that we cannot survive for long as independent but isolated peoples unless we also think and act together**, and unless we prove by deeds that we belong to a family of Southeast Asian nations **bound together by ties of friendship and goodwill**, and imbued with our own ideals and aspirations, and **determined to shape our own destiny**. With the **establishment of ASEAN**, we have taken **a firm and a bold step on that road.**”
28. Looking at the **global challenges today** – from **geopolitics to trade wars**, from **supply chain bottlenecks to climate change risks** and the **darker side of AI and tech** – **ASEAN member states must think and**

act together – not only for us to survive, but also to thrive.

29. And I strongly believe that **how Malaysia steers ASEAN towards its aspirations in 2025, will have an impact that will last well beyond 2025, and even beyond our lifetimes.**
30. To that end, **I invite all of you sitting here, to join us on that highly important journey, as we help shape ASEAN's future,** which will have a bearing on YOUR and all Malaysians' collective future.
31. So, from your involvement in today's programme, please share and transfer the knowledge gained today to others and be our ASEAN Ambassadors.
32. Let's look forward to our ASEAN Chairmanship year with enthusiasm, while **making this region that we all call home, much stronger and more united.** Thank you.