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Malaysia plans major economic push as Asean Chair

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BANGI: Malaysia will capitalise on its Asean chairmanship to enhance its appeal as a key destination for investment, tourism and trade across various sectors, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Speaking at a press conference during a Cabinet retreat here, the Prime Minister emphasised Malaysia's commitment to solidify its position in key industries including semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), data centres, renewable energy and food security.

"We are setting our course as the Asean Chair while increasing Malaysia's attractiveness as a hub for investment, tourism and trade in multiple sectors," he said.

"We are discussing how to sustain the semiconductor industry, explore AI and data centres, strengthen renewable energy efforts and emphasise the importance of agriculture, particularly food technology and security."

When asked about Malaysia's preparations for its Asean chairmanship, Anwar said he is proud of the dedication and commitment of all parties involved.

However, he said further refinements are being made to ensure Malaysia delivers an outstanding Asean summit.

"This will enhance Malaysia's image, and as a trading nation, we must seize this opportunity to strengthen our trade efforts," he said.

Anwar highlighted that Malaysia's Asean chairmanship coincides with several major diplomatic and economic engagements, making it a significant year for the country.

"This will be the first Asean Summit involving the Gulf Cooperation Council and China. Additionally, the Foreign Minister has proposed an Asean-United States summit," he said.

He also revealed that Malaysia will host a series of large-scale exhibitions and conferences throughout the year, organised in collaboration with media companies, trading firms and Gulf nations.

"This ensures that Malaysia, starting from May, will be a focal point for global media and major corporations from the Arab world, China, the United States and Asean," he said.

In a notable first, he said South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa will visit Malaysia and has pledged support for Asean on behalf of the African continent, further enhancing Malaysia's diplomatic reach.