



SPECIAL ADDRESS

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IN CONJUNCTION WITH

**ASEAN SUSTAINABLE URBANISATION FORUM
(ASUF), THE ASEAN GOVERNORS AND
MAYORS FORUM (AGMF) AND THE MEETING
OF GOVERNORS AND MAYORS OF ASEAN
CAPITALS (MGMAC) 2025**

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KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi
wabarakatuh, Selamat Sejahtera, good
morning and warm greetings to all
distinguished guests from across ASEAN
and beyond.

- Director General of Federal Territories,
Datuk Seri Noridah
- **Dato' Seri Maimunah**, Mayor of Kuala
Lumpur
- Representatives of Government and
Agencies
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and
Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION

1. I am deeply honoured to be here this morning to address this distinguished gathering of ASEAN's governors, mayors and urban leaders. This forum is an important moment for us, where we can align our strategies and set a common direction for the future of the region's cities.
2. This year, Malaysia holds the ASEAN Chairmanship with the theme of Inclusivity and Sustainability. This will be the determining factor as to whether urban development will bring prosperity that can be shared collectively, or instead widen the gap of inequality.

3. Any decision we make will have a multiplying effect in the decades ahead, particularly in how we manage our cities, from mobility and housing, to the economy and even to climate governance. All of these will determine whether ASEAN 2045 becomes a success story or the opposite. Therefore, before we set any course of action, we must first understand the realities of urbanisation in this region and the responsibilities that come with it.

ASEAN URBANISATION LANDSCAPE

Distinguished guests,

4. Urbanisation has now become the main driver of economic and social change in ASEAN. Today, almost half of ASEAN's 680 million population lives in urban areas. By 2030, this percentage expected to exceed 55 percent, with the fastest growth occurring in medium and large cities.

5. Our cities now contribute around 80 percent of the region's GDP. This fact reminds us that shared prosperity depends heavily on how well we manage and guide urban growth in a planned manner for the benefit of all citizens. I believe that if this growth managed well, it can become an engine for innovation, competitiveness and improved quality of life. However, if neglected, it can widen social gaps, put pressure on infrastructure and harm the environment.

6. The pace and quality of urbanisation, however, vary widely. Some cities have achieved high standards of infrastructure, public services and economic competitiveness, while others face challenges such as congestion, inadequate housing, environmental stress and limited access to essential services. This diversity of realities calls for strategies that uplift cities still developing their capacity while sustaining the momentum of those already advanced, ensuring no community will be left behind.

7. Understanding the economic contribution and challenges that exist brings us to a bigger question: how will we address the pressures and opportunities that will shape the fate of ASEAN's cities in the decades to come?

REGIONAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Ladies and gentlemen,

8. The most pressing challenge is climate change. Floods, heatwaves, rising sea levels and coastal erosion have already become a daily reality for many urban communities. Solutions such as the Sponge City concept, the construction of bioswales to filter and slow rainwater runoff and On-site Detention (OSD) drainage to control stormwater discharge have proven effective and need to be implemented more widely.

9. In addition to this issue, demographic change is also having a significant impact. Malaysia, like several other ASEAN countries, expected to become an ageing nation by 2030, with nearly 15 percent of its population aged 60 and above. This situation requires cities that are elderly-friendly, with easy access to healthcare, suitable public transport and public spaces that are inclusive for all age groups.

10. The global economic transition towards the digital economy and renewable energy also plays an important role and requires cities to be more agile, to adopt smart technologies and to develop climate-resilient infrastructure. I estimate that cities prepared for this change will become ASEAN's centres of competitiveness by 2045.

11. The challenges I have mentioned are interconnected. For example, climate risks can worsen social inequality. Demographic change can place pressure on service systems. Economic transitions can leave some groups behind if inclusivity is not made the foundation. This is why we need a framework that brings together all these priorities under one clear vision and set of targets.

THE CHASE CITY VISION

Distinguished guests,

12. It is within this context of interconnected challenges that Malaysia has sought to define a guiding vision, one that is practical in implementation yet adaptable to diverse circumstances across ASEAN. We believe that the success of our cities will depend on how effectively we integrate environmental stewardship, social well-being and economic competitiveness into a single, coherent strategy.

13. In the Federal Territories of Malaysia, we have introduced the CHASE City framework, a vision for cities that are Clean, Healthy, Advanced, Safe and Eco-friendly. This is not a collection of separate agendas, but an integrated philosophy that guides urban policy, design and governance in a holistic way.

14. Under the CHASE City framework, environmental stewardship, community well-being, technological innovation and public trust are approached as mutually reinforcing priorities. Progress in one area strengthens progress in all others, ensuring that our cities remain adaptable, competitive and liveable for generations to come.

15. Although newly introduced in the Federal Territories, this framework was designed with the flexibility to respond to different urban realities. Its philosophy can inform initiatives that address coastal resilience, improve public transport integration, or expand urban greenery to mitigate heat stress. By offering a versatile foundation, it opens pathways for ASEAN cities to shape solutions that reflect their own unique priorities and aspirations.

16. This framework aligns closely with ASEAN's urban priorities because it offers both a principled foundation and the flexibility to adapt to local realities. It enables collaboration between government, business, academia and civil society, fostering solutions that communities can participate in, own and sustain over the long term.

17. The Kota MADANI or MADANI City development in Putrajaya, launched recently by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, is a tangible manifestation of the CHASE City framework. It has been designed as a township that integrates all five CHASE elements, incorporating low-carbon solutions, AI-driven smart technologies, active and safe mobility, a comprehensive green network and community facilities that enhance liveability. This integration demonstrates how CHASE functions as a holistic and resilient ecosystem.

STRENGTHENING IDENTITY AND SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH THE DAVOS BAUKULTUR ALLIANCE

18. Our commitment to quality urban environments also reflected in Malaysia's membership in the Davos Baukultur Alliance, an initiative under the World Economic Forum. Malaysia is proud to be the first country outside Europe continent to join this global coalition, which promotes a built environment rooted in human dignity, cultural identity and environmental responsibility. This membership support the implementation of CHASE, particularly in embedding identity, heritage and human values in development.

19. This membership reflects our belief that cities are more than functional spaces. They are cultural and social ecosystems whose physical form should strengthen identity, foster inclusion and inspire pride among residents. It ensures that progress does not come at the cost of heritage or community spirit.

20. By linking the values of Baukultur with the practical approaches of CHASE, we are positioning our cities to meet contemporary challenges while preserving the cultural and environmental heritage that defines us. This approach makes them models of both innovation and continuity.
21. To illustrate how these values are brought to life, let me share an example from Kuala Lumpur. In Kuala Lumpur, we are applying Baukultur principles to enrich the CHASE approach through an initiative called Warisan KL, which focuses on preserving and revitalising nationally significant heritage sites.

22. This includes the Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad, a late 19th-century Moorish-style building that once served as the seat of the British colonial administration and Carcosa Seri Negara, a historic mansion that has hosted dignitaries for over a century. These restorations are efforts to maintain living symbols of our history while giving them new relevance through cultural, civic and tourism functions.

23. Such projects demonstrate that heritage preservation can do more than safeguard the past. By integrating adaptive reuse and sustainable design, they create public spaces that strengthen civic pride, attract visitors and stimulate economic activity, all while reducing the environmental impact compared to new construction. These are principles that can be applied in any ASEAN city, adapted to its own heritage and community needs.

24. We are also committed to developing Baukultur pioneering sites in Kuala Lumpur, where vacant buildings will undergo adaptive reuse guided by the principles and characteristics of both CHASE and Baukultur. In essence, Baukultur strengthens the CHASE vision, ensuring that our cities are not only sustainable and competitive but also culturally grounded and deeply connected to their communities.

25. I take this opportunity to invite my colleagues from across ASEAN to join Malaysia in advancing the Baukultur movement, so that our region's cities can thrive in ways that honour our heritage, strengthen our identity and secure a sustainable future.

TRANSLATING VALUES INTO REGIONAL ACTION

Ladies and gentlemen,

26. Building on the CHASE City vision, we now have the opportunity to work together in shaping cities that are sustainable, resilient and inclusive. The framework offers a flexible foundation that can be adapted to the diverse realities of ASEAN cities while keeping us aligned on shared priorities.

27. Our collaboration can focus on cleaner and greener urban environment, stronger public health outcomes and the integration of technology to make our cities more efficient and responsive. These efforts will also enhance safety, accessibility and the overall quality of life for our people.
28. Revitalising underused spaces, promoting climate-resilient infrastructure and advancing renewable energy adoption are all practical measures that can strengthen our competitiveness while safeguarding our environment for the long term.

29. Equally important is governance that inspires trust, with institutions that are capable, transparent and engaged with the communities they serve. This will ensure that the benefits of urban progress shared widely and sustainably.
30. Knowledge-sharing is vital. An ASEAN platform for exchanging practical solutions, data and innovations can accelerate progress, allowing cities to adapt successful models from each other and avoid repeating costly mistakes.

CLOSING

Distinguished leaders, ladies and gentlemen,

31. The future of ASEAN's cities will be determined by the choices we make today. These choices will decide whether our urban environments become centres of opportunity and well-being, or sources of inequality and vulnerability in the years ahead.

32. The CHASE vision is Malaysia's contribution to this shared journey, grounded in our experience in the Federal Territories, enriched by global partnerships such as the Davos Baukultur Alliance and offered as a source of inspiration for ASEAN's collective future.

33. As we part ways, let us also set our sights on building an enduring ASEAN platform where urban leaders can share knowledge, scale up proven innovations like CHASE and jointly mobilise the resources needed for transformative change. Let this be our commitment ahead of the next ASEAN gathering, so that the momentum from today's dialogue continues to grow into actions that shape the next chapter of our region's history.

Wabillahi taufiq wal hidayah,
wassalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi
wabarakatuh.

Terima kasih. Thank you.