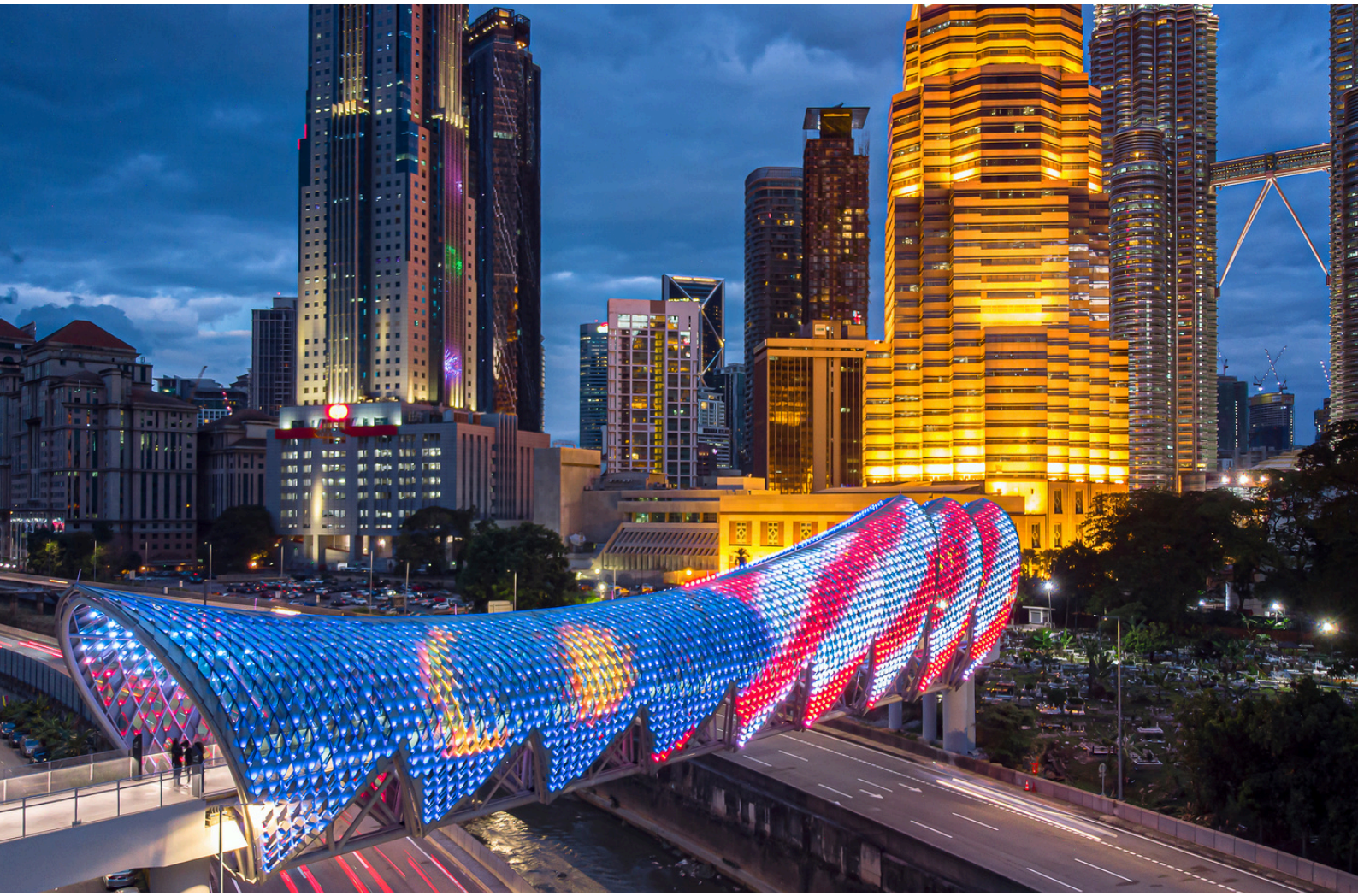
KSI
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STRATEGIC INSTITUTE FOR ASIA PACIFIC

BRIEF

ASIA ECONOMIC AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMIT

20th August 2026, InterContinental Hotel, Kuala Lumpur



The Asia Economic & Entrepreneurship Summit (AEES) 2026 brought together regional leaders, policymakers and business representatives to discuss Asia's economic resilience amid changing geopolitical and economic conditions. The summit highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship, regional cooperation, technological innovation, digital transformation and sustainable economic development. Discussions also focused on strengthening SMEs, responsible business practices, ESG, supply-chain resilience and stronger Japan-Malaysia and ASEAN partnerships. Overall, the summit provided a platform for sharing ideas, strengthening business connections and encouraging greater cooperation towards a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future for Asia.

Opening Ceremony:

Datuk Seri Mohd Iqbal Rawther, Deputy Chairman, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific, Chairman, Economic Club of Kuala Lumpur

Geopolitics, Entrepreneurship and Strengthening Malaysia–Japan Cooperation: The importance of understanding the changing relationship between geopolitics and economics, particularly how political developments increasingly influence business decisions and economic realities. The speaker emphasised that entrepreneurship is essential to empowering people through employment and economic opportunity, drawing on Malaysia's experience in developing its entrepreneurial spirit and learning from Japan's approach to entrepreneurship. The address also highlighted the longstanding Malaysia-Japan relationship and the importance of the region's Asian centrality and neutrality amid increasing global fragmentation, encouraging Asian countries to strengthen cooperation and work together to build greater resilience and prosperity.

Keynote Speaker:

H.E. Shikata Noriyuki, Ambassador of Japan to Malaysia

Japan-Malaysia Partnership and Shared Opportunities: The keynote emphasised the potential to combine Japan's technological and industrial strengths with Malaysia's economic dynamism, strategic location and growing educational capabilities. The Ambassador highlighted the longstanding Japan-Malaysia relationship and encouraged both countries to build on existing cooperation to create new opportunities and develop more resilient, responsible and future-ready enterprises across Asia.

Technology, Industrial Transformation and Strategic Growth: Japan's cooperation with Malaysia was highlighted across strategic sectors including AI, semiconductors, digital transformation, critical minerals, medical research, quantum technology and advanced manufacturing. Malaysia's position as a major global semiconductor assembly and testing hub was identified as an important foundation for deeper collaboration, alongside emerging opportunities in physical AI, startups and other high-value technologies.

Energy Security, Green Transition and Resilience: The speech stressed the importance of strengthening energy security and sustainable development amid changing global conditions. Japan and Malaysia were encouraged to cooperate on green hydrogen, ammonia, sustainable aviation fuel and other clean-energy technologies, while initiatives supporting diversified supply chains and stronger emergency preparedness were presented as important components of a more resilient Asian economy.

Maritime Security and Regional Stability: Maritime security was identified as another important area of Japan-Malaysia cooperation, with both countries sharing commitments to the rule of law, freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes. Collaboration in areas such as coast guard training, maritime safety and secure trade routes was highlighted as contributing to regional stability, connectivity and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific.

People-to-People Connections and Future Cooperation: The Ambassador emphasised that lasting bilateral relations depend not only on government agreements but also on people-to-people connections involving students, researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs and citizens. Looking towards the 70th anniversary of Japan-Malaysia diplomatic relations in 2027, he called for greater co-creation, innovation and inclusive growth, encouraging business leaders and entrepreneurs to translate existing partnerships into new investments, ventures and practical solutions for a resilient and prosperous Asia.

Session One: Asia's Hard Choices- Managing Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Risk

Speakers: Dato' Ramesh Kodammal, Chairman, ASEAN India Economic Council (AIEC) & Founder / Chairman, Goldtex Group, Malaysia**; Prof. Dr. Phar Kim Beng,** Director, Institute of International and ASEAN Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)**; Mr. Rajiv Biswas,** Chief Executive Officer, Asia-Pacific Economics**; Prof. M Nazri Muhd,** Chief AI Architect & Advisor AI & DesignThinking (AIDT) Lab, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific; **Mr. Mohd Sedek Jantan,** Director, Investment Strategist & Country Economist, IPP Wealth Managers Ltd

Moderator: Datuk Seri Mohd Iqbal Rawther Deputy Chairman, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific Chairman, Economic Club of Kuala Lumpur

Asia's Economic Resilience Amid Global Crises: The panel highlighted that global economic crises have occurred repeatedly over the past five decades, including the oil crises, Black Monday, the Asian Financial Crisis, the Global Financial Crisis, COVID-19, inflation, high interest rates, and ongoing geopolitical tensions. Despite these disruptions, Asia has remained highly resilient and continues to experience strong economic growth. Countries such as China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Singapore continue to show significant economic momentum. Asia's young and growing population, expanding markets, manufacturing capabilities, and increasing investment flows provide strong foundations for the region to become an increasingly important global economic centre and potentially surpass Europe in economic influence.

Geopolitical Risks and Opportunities for Asia: Asia is increasingly exposed to geopolitical competition, particularly between the United States and China, as well as disruptions arising from conflicts in other regions such as the Middle East. These developments affect energy prices, supply chains, trade, investment, and access to critical resources. However, the speakers emphasised that exposure to risks can also create opportunities. Japan and other major economies are increasingly looking toward Malaysia and other Asian countries to establish secure supply chains for critical minerals, advanced technology, manufacturing, and raw materials. Therefore, maintaining regional peace, stability, diplomacy, and cooperation is essential for Asia to benefit from the shifting global economic environment while reducing its vulnerability to external shocks.

Strengthening Businesses Through AI and Innovation: The discussion emphasised the importance of strengthening businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), so they can survive economic and geopolitical disruptions. SMEs are highly important to Asian economies because they contribute significantly to employment and economic activity, but many

remain vulnerable to declining sales, limited access to financing, supply-chain disruptions, and rising costs. Businesses therefore need stronger financial management, business valuation, fundraising strategies, partnerships, risk assessment, and succession planning. At the same time, AI and digital technologies can help businesses analyse risks, improve decision-making, recognise intangible assets such as intellectual property, and develop new business models, allowing enterprises to become more innovative and resilient.

Preparing for Future Economic and Financial Shocks: The panel concluded that businesses and governments must prepare proactively rather than simply reacting when crises occur. Important risks include commodity and energy price volatility, currency fluctuations, changing interest rates, geopolitical tensions, and disruptions to international trade. Businesses should identify their exposure to particular countries, currencies, suppliers, markets, and geopolitical risks while maintaining sufficient financial and operational flexibility. At the same time, entrepreneurs should not allow economic forecasts and predictions to discourage productive investment or expansion when their businesses remain fundamentally strong. The overall message was to combine careful risk management with confidence, innovation, and long-term planning, using AI and other tools to make better decisions in an increasingly uncertain global economy.

Session Two: Building Asia's Resilient And Responsible Enterprises:

Speakers: Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa, Chairman, Perbadanan Usahawan Nasional Berhad (PUNB); **Adjunct Practice Prof. Cheah Kok Hoong,** President, ESG Association of Malaysia; **Datin Dr. (h.c) Hajah Hartini Osman,** Global President, G100 Chair for Philanthropy, Business & Poverty Eradication; **Mr. The Fei Ming,** Managing Director and Chief Investment Officer – Global Private Equity; **Mr. Sean Poi,** CEO and Co-founder, Codemax Sdn Bhd; **Dato' Azlin Ahmad Shaharbi,** Former President, PENIAGAWATI; **Ms. Shan Loy,** Manager – Strategic Partnerships & Networking, Taylor's Centre for Family Business
Moderator: Prof. Annie Koh, Professor Emeritus of Finance (Practice), Singapore Management University / EXCO Member, ASEAN Economic Club

Building Resilient and Responsible Businesses: The panel emphasized that successful businesses should not focus only on profits but should also contribute positively to their employees, communities, and the environment. The speakers highlighted the importance of corporate social responsibility, ESG, sustainability, and community engagement in creating businesses that can remain resilient during difficult economic conditions. Examples were shared of organizations supporting poverty eradication, education, social enterprises, and community development. The panel stressed that businesses should consider their wider impact on society and the environment. Therefore, responsible businesses should aim to balance financial performance with social responsibility, sustainability, and meaningful contributions to the communities in which they operate.

Strengthening SMEs and Supporting Entrepreneurs: A major focus of the panel was the importance of supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which form a large part of the business community. The speakers explained that support should go beyond financial assistance and include business matching, market access, training, coaching, digitalization, and

networking opportunities. Several examples showed how small businesses have used social media, online platforms, technology, and new markets to expand their operations. However, entrepreneurs continue to face challenges such as limited resources, changing consumer demand, rising costs, and foreign competition. The panel therefore encouraged government agencies, financial institutions, and business associations to provide wider support to help SMEs become more competitive, resilient, and sustainable.

Improving Legal Literacy and Business Compliance: The panel highlighted legal literacy as an essential but often neglected aspect of entrepreneurship, particularly among micro-business owners. Many entrepreneurs focus on sales, marketing, financing, and technology but may not fully understand contracts, registration, legal structures, compliance, and their responsibilities. One speaker stressed that entrepreneurs should have basic knowledge of legal matters and understand how to create simple contracts to protect their businesses. The discussion also highlighted the importance of understanding different business structures, such as enterprises and companies, because these affect ownership, liability, and succession. The speakers suggested that legal education should be included in entrepreneurship and government support programmes so that business owners can make informed decisions, comply with regulations, and reduce unnecessary legal risks.

Family Business, Succession and Intergenerational Development: Another important theme was the sustainability of family businesses and successful succession between generations. The speakers explained that transferring a business is not simply about giving control to younger family members; it requires communication, trust, preparation, and cooperation between different generations. Family members may have different expectations and ideas about the future of the company, making open communication particularly important. The panel also emphasized that family businesses have responsibilities beyond the family because employees and their families depend on the business for their livelihoods. Younger generations can contribute by introducing new knowledge, technology, and innovative ideas while respecting the experience of older generations. Proper succession planning, education, mentorship, and strong family relationships can therefore help businesses survive across generations.

Technology, Global Competition and Future Growth: The panel stressed that Malaysian businesses must adapt to technology, AI, digitalization, and changing global competition in order to remain successful. The speakers noted that foreign companies, particularly from China, are entering markets with competitive prices, advanced technology, and efficient business models, creating greater pressure on local businesses. Entrepreneurs were encouraged to adopt technology, improve productivity, use digital platforms to reach customers, and explore international markets. At the same time, the panel emphasized that technological development should remain connected to human values such as integrity, compassion, responsibility, and sustainability. The overall message was that businesses must be willing to learn, experiment, innovate, and prepare for unexpected challenges while maintaining strong values and a long-term vision for growth.

Closing Remarks:

Tan Sri Michael Yeoh, Chairman, ASEAN Economic Club (AEC) President, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific

Strengthening Asia Through Trade, Technology and Trust: Tan Sri Michael Yeoh welcomed the distinguished guests and highlighted the importance of strengthening cooperation across Asia in response to growing geopolitical and economic challenges. He emphasised trade, technology and trust as three key priorities for the region, stressing the need for stronger collaboration, talent development, digital transformation and sustainable economic growth. He also highlighted Malaysia's long-standing partnerships with countries such as Japan and the importance of ASEAN and Asia having a stronger voice internationally. He further introduced initiatives aimed at connecting businesses across Asia, the Middle East and Africa, while encouraging greater cooperation, sustainability and business partnerships to build a more resilient future for the region.

Acceptance Speech:

The Hon. Senator Dato' Awang Bemee bin Awang Ali Basah, President of the Senate of Malaysia

Acceptance of the Asia Pacific Distinguished Leader Award: The Hon. Senator Dato Awang Bemee bin Awang Ali Basah accepted the Asia Pacific Distinguished Leader Award with humility, emphasising that leadership should be measured not by titles or honours but by the trust earned, institutions strengthened and positive impact made on society. He expressed appreciation to KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific, the ASEAN Economic Club, the World Business Chamber and PBEC for the recognition, while highlighting the Tenth Asia Economic and Entrepreneurship Summit's decade-long contribution to regional dialogue and cooperation.

Role of the Senate and Principles of Public Service: The Senator dedicated the recognition to the Senate of Malaysia, highlighting its role as the country's highest legislative body and its function in providing checks and balances within the legislative process. He stressed that public office is ultimately a public trust and that parliamentary decisions, debates and scrutiny of legislation must be guided by integrity, accountability and service to the nation. He also emphasised the Senate's responsibility to promote careful deliberation, responsible governance and consideration of future generations.

Resilience, Good Governance and Economic Development: Addressing the increasingly complex global environment, the speech highlighted geopolitical tensions, changing supply chains, technological disruption and concerns surrounding energy, climate and food security. Against this backdrop, resilience was identified as essential for both nations and businesses, built upon strong institutions, good governance, transparency, accountability and public confidence. Malaysia's economic progress was described as inseparable from the strength of its democratic institutions, with government, entrepreneurs, investors, academia and civil society each contributing to inclusive and sustainable development.

ASEAN Cooperation and Responsible Leadership: The speech called for stronger partnerships and cooperation across borders, sectors and disciplines as ASEAN continues towards greater regional integration. It emphasised that economic progress must remain inclusive, sustainable and beneficial to future generations, while recognising the Summit as an important platform for bringing together ideas, experiences and partnerships across the Asia-Pacific. The address concluded by stressing that true leadership is defined by stewardship and responsibility, measured by the lives improved, institutions strengthened and legacy created.

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