



OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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“UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF AI AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: THE SOUTHEAST ASIA INFLECTION POINT”

**WORLD DIGITAL ECONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT
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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

**Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,
Salam Sejahtera and Salam Malaysia MADANI.**

(SALUTATIONS)

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EXCELLENCIES,
HONOURABLE SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS
MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

Allow me to begin with a reminder from the Holy Quran.

Allah SWT says:

“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due.”

(Surah An-Nisa’, 4:58)

This verse reminds us that every responsibility entrusted to us carries an obligation to act with wisdom, integrity and foresight.

1. As we gather at the **World Digital Economy and Technology Summit (WDET) 2026** under the theme ***“Unleashing the Potential of AI and Digital Technology: The Southeast Asia Inflection Point,”*** our conversation extends far beyond algorithms, data and digital infrastructure. At its heart, it is a conversation about amanah.
2. The rise of artificial intelligence presents one of the defining opportunities of our generation. **Yet the true measure of our success will not be determined by how rapidly we deploy technology, but by how wisely we govern it, how inclusively we share its benefits, and how faithfully we ensure that innovation serves the common good.**
3. For ultimately, technology is not an end in itself. It is a trust placed in our hands. A responsibility to ensure that the systems we build uplift human dignity, strengthen our societies, expand opportunity, and leave future generations better equipped to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. The question facing every serious economy in Southeast Asia is no longer whether to engage with artificial intelligence and digital transformation. **That debate is over. The question now is whether we will shape this transition, or be shaped by it.**
5. That distinction will determine who attracts investment, develops talent, drives innovation and secures long-term competitiveness in the decades ahead.
6. Our ability to get there rests on three essential pillars of successful digital transformation. Those pillars are **Trust, Talent and Technology.**
7. **Trust** in governance frameworks that make AI safe, ethical and reliable.
8. **Talent** capable of building, managing and directing these systems.
9. And **technology** that is not merely imported, but adapted to serve our own priorities, aspirations and development goals.

10. Southeast Asia is not short of ambition. What is required now is the discipline and determination to translate ambition into action.
11. To build the energy systems, governance frameworks, talent pipelines and regional partnerships that transform vision into reality. That is what brings us together today.
12. And I am pleased to join leaders from across government, industry and academia who recognise that while dialogue remains important, the window for meaningful action is becoming increasingly narrow. **The decisions we make today will shape the opportunities available tomorrow.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. The investment case for Malaysia as a regional digital hub has already been established. Global technology companies and hyperscalers have made significant commitments.
14. Since 2021, Malaysia has approved more than **RM140 billion in data centre and cloud computing investments.**

Our data centre market is projected to be among the fastest-growing in Southeast Asia over the next five years.

15. These developments reflect confidence in Malaysia's economic fundamentals, strategic location and long-term potential. However, capital alone does not build a digital economy. **Investment needs infrastructure. And the infrastructure it needs most is reliable, resilient and sustainable power.**

16. A hyperscale AI-focused data centre can consume as much electricity annually as **100,000 households**. As these facilities multiply, the pressure on our grid, water systems and energy supply becomes increasingly significant.

17. The challenge before us is therefore not peripheral. It is central. This is the honest conversation Malaysia is having with itself and with investors. **The constraint is not ambition. The constraint is infrastructure.**

18. And any nation that is serious about its digital future must be equally serious about the energy and water foundations that

support it. We have already begun to experience these realities.

19. Johor, for example, has adopted a more selective approach towards future data centre approvals, taking into account both energy and water requirements. These are not signs of hesitation. They are signs of responsible governance.

20. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference between growth and sustainable growth. **The question is not whether demand exists. The question is whether our infrastructure can keep pace. That is where our attention is focused.**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

21. Malaysia is not waiting for these challenges to resolve themselves. The work is already underway. Our **National Energy Transition Roadmap** provides the strategic framework for this transformation.

22. **The PETRA Strategic Plan 2026–2030** translates that vision into implementation through **119 programmes and 133**

measurable targets, with grid modernisation, digitalisation and demand-side management at its core.

23. At the same time, **Tenaga Nasional Berhad** has committed **RM43 billion between 2025 and 2027** to strengthen and modernise our grid, including the integration of artificial intelligence into grid management systems.

24. This is not merely an aspiration. It is investment already being deployed. Last month, we commissioned the **Santong Battery Energy Storage System in Terengganu**. With a capacity of **100 megawatts and 400 megawatt-hours**, it is among Malaysia's earliest utility-scale battery storage projects.

25. More importantly, it represents a practical step towards building a grid capable of integrating renewable energy at scale while maintaining the reliability required by modern digital infrastructure.

26. On the supply side, Malaysia has surpassed **13.3 gigawatts** of installed renewable energy capacity as of 2025, with solar energy recording the fastest growth.

27. We are also developing a **1,000-megawatt solar project to supply clean energy to the Johor–Singapore Special Economic Zone**, directly supporting the digital infrastructure ecosystem emerging within that corridor.

28. Water is equally important. Data centres are intensive users of water for cooling purposes. **Malaysia currently produces 48.5 million litres per day of reclaimed water and is targeting 118 million litres per day by 2030 for industrial use.**

29. We are also undertaking a comprehensive study this year to establish the policy and infrastructure foundations necessary for a future **National Water Reclamation Policy**. Taken together, these are not isolated initiatives. They form an integrated national response to a challenge that sits at the intersection of energy, water and digital infrastructure.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tun Abdul Razak once reminded us that development must ultimately improve the lives of the people.

That principle remains as relevant today as it was then.

Infrastructure has never been an end in itself.

Electricity was never simply about power.

Water was never simply about supply.

And digital infrastructure is not simply about technology.

30. These investments are ultimately about creating opportunities, enabling innovation, improving productivity and ensuring that future generations inherit a stronger nation than the one we inherited. **That remains Malaysia's guiding principle.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

31. Governments play an important role. We establish policy direction. We provide regulatory certainty. We invest in public infrastructure. And we create the conditions necessary for long-term growth. Malaysia has done so and will continue to do so. However, the scale and pace of transformation

required cannot be achieved by governments alone. The private sector is not a supporting actor in this journey. It is a co-builder.

32. To the investors, technology companies and business leaders gathered here today, Malaysia's message is straightforward. **We are not simply offering a market. We are offering a partnership.** A partnership to build regional digital infrastructure that is resilient, sustainable and future-ready. This requires investment not only in computing capacity, but also in the energy systems that power it.

33. It requires not only financial capital, but also technology transfer, operational expertise and long-term commitment. It requires collaboration that creates value not only for shareholders, but also for communities and future generations. It also requires serious engagement with the governance questions at the heart of this Summit.

Sovereign AI.

Agentic systems.

Digital inclusion.

These are not abstract concepts.

34. They are the very conditions that will determine whether technological progress creates shared prosperity or deepens existing divides. ASEAN stands at an important juncture.

35. The economies that recognise energy infrastructure as digital infrastructure, that treat AI as strategic national capacity and that embrace regional cooperation will be best positioned to lead.

36. Those that fail to do so risk falling behind. Malaysia has made its choice. And we invite you to build alongside us.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude with a final reflection.

***Every generation is entrusted with a defining responsibility.
For previous generations, it was nation-building.***

For others, it was industrialisation, electrification and economic transformation.

Our generation faces a different challenge.

We are tasked with shaping the future of intelligence itself. Artificial intelligence will transform economies, industries and societies.

But technology alone has never determined the success of a nation. What matters is the wisdom with which it is applied.

The opportunities it creates.

And the values that guide its use.

37. The AI transition is therefore not merely a technological transformation. **It is a test of leadership. A test of whether we can build economies that are innovative yet inclusive, competitive yet sustainable, and advanced yet deeply human.**

38. The nexus between AI and energy transition is not incidental. It is structural. AI is accelerating energy demand. At the same time, AI is one of the most powerful tools available to optimise grids, improve efficiency, reduce waste and accelerate the integration of renewable energy.

39. Malaysia intends to lead on both fronts. The investments are underway. The renewable energy capacity is being expanded. The policy architecture is in place. The foundations have been laid.

40. What remains is our collective commitment to execute with urgency, discipline and purpose. Because the choices we make today will outlive us. They will shape the opportunities available to future generations.

41. They will determine whether those who come after us inherit systems that are resilient or fragile, sustainable or exhausted, inclusive or unequal.

42. And perhaps that is the real responsibility before us. Not merely to build more powerful technologies. But to build a future worthy of the people who will inherit it.

43. If we succeed, this moment will not be remembered simply as the age when artificial intelligence transformed our economies.

44. It will be remembered as the moment when we chose to harness innovation responsibly, steward resources wisely and work together to create lasting prosperity for future generations.

45. Let us rise to that responsibility together. On that note, it is my honour to declare the **5th World Digital Economy and Technology Summit** officially open.

46. May our deliberations today produce not only bold ideas, but meaningful partnerships and concrete actions that move our region forward.

Thank you.

Wabillahi Taufiq Wal Hidayah, Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi

Wabarakatuh.