



## Conference on ASEAN at the Geopolitical Crossroads

**Theme** : *ASEAN at the Geopolitical Crossroads*  
**Date** : *26th January 2026*  
**Time** : *9.30 am - 6.30 pm*  
**Location** : *London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), United Kingdom*

LSE IDEAS, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific (KSI), and the ASEAN Business Club (ABC) are proposing to co-host a high-level conference on “ASEAN at the Geopolitical Crossroads” at the London School of Economics and Political Science in early 2026. This in-person, closed-door event will bring together Southeast Asia’s top policymakers, diplomats, and business leaders with their UK counterparts to examine Southeast Asia’s strategic outlook and potential for deeper engagement with the United Kingdom.

As the global order fragments, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) stands at a critical inflection point. With over 680 million people and a combined GDP nearing USD 4 trillion, it remains a key engine of growth and stability but faces rising pressures from great power rivalry, protectionism, and weakening multilateralism.

The return of President Donald Trump to the White House has added to global uncertainty, reinforcing the need for ASEAN to adopt a more assertive external posture. In this shifting environment, ASEAN must strengthen its collective diplomacy, defend its economic interests, and avoid being sidelined in decisions that affect the region’s long-term security and prosperity.

This conference will place ASEAN’s voice at the centre of London’s policy and academic circles. It will also explore concrete opportunities for collaboration in education, trade, and technology, drawing on the intellectual strength of LSE IDEAS, the convening reach of KSI, and the private sector leadership of ABC. The event will conclude with a policy-oriented publication for ASEAN leaders and UK decision-makers.

## Programme

<i>Time</i>	<i>Agenda</i>
9.30 am - 10.30 am	<p><b>OPENING CEREMONY</b></p> <p><b><u>Welcome Addresses:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Professor Chris Alden</b> Director, LSE IDEAS &amp; Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science</li> <li>• <b>Tan Sri Dr Munir Majid</b> President, ASEAN Business Club &amp; Chairman, International Advisory Board, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Proposed Special Address via Recorded Remarks</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>His Excellency Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim</b> (TBC) Prime Minister of Malaysia (ASEAN Chair 2025)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Proposed Keynote Address:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>His Excellency Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.</b> (TBC) President of the Republic of the Philippines (ASEAN Chair 2026)</li> </ul>
10.30 am - 12.00 pm	<p><b><u>Session 1</u></b> Topic: <b>ASEAN in the Swirling Geoeconomics of Uncertain Global Order</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lead Paper</b> on ASEAN's Trade, Economic, and Geoeconomic Options presented by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>His Excellency Tengku Datuk Seri Utama Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz</b>, Malaysia's Minister of Investment, Trade &amp; Industry (2022-2025), Chair of ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) 2025, Minister of Finance (2020-2022)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Panel Discussion with Proposed Commentators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Mr Mak Joon Nien</b> – Chief Executive Officer, Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia &amp; Chairman, British Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (BMCC)</li> <li>○ <b>Prof. Emeritus Dr. Suthipand Chirathivat</b> – Executive Director, Central Group, Thailand</li> <li>○ <b>Lord Marland</b> – Chairman, Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC)</li> <li>○ <b>1 LSE professor</b> (TBC)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
12.00 pm -	<b><u>Luncheon Address:</u></b>

1.30 pm	<p>ASEAN's Global Relevance in a Fragmented World</p> <p>Proposed Speaker:  <b>Rt. Hon. Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri (Dr) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari bin Tun Datuk Abang Haji Openg (TBC)</b>  Premier of Sarawak, Malaysia</p> <p>Presentation of the <b>UK-ASEAN Business Excellence Awards &amp; UK-ASEAN Business Icon Leadership Awards</b></p>
2.00 pm - 4.30 pm	<p><b><u>Session 2</u></b></p> <p>Topic: <b>ASEAN in a Shifting Geopolitical Global Order</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessing the global impact of President Trump's second term and its implications for ASEAN's partnerships, including with the UK</li> <li>Navigating ASEAN's position between the United States and China while expanding ties with middle powers like the UK</li> <li>Reinforcing ASEAN centrality in diplomacy and trade, and identifying where the UK can support regional stability and open markets</li> </ul> <p>Paper by <b>Professor Thitinan Pongsudhirak</b>  Director, Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand</p> <p>Commentators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mr Joey Concepcion</b> – Chairman, ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) 2026</li> <li><b>Ambassador Bilahari Kausikan</b> – Distinguished Fellow, Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore &amp; Former Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore</li> <li><b>1 LSE professor (TBC)</b></li> <li>Moderator: <b>Tan Sri Michael Yeoh</b> – President, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific (KSI)</li> </ul>
4.30 pm - 5.30 pm	<p><b>Closing Session</b></p> <p>The Closing Session will be a facilitated session to explore two proposed research pillars, which will shape outputs to be presented to ASEAN Leaders at the end of 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Professor Chris Alden</b>  Director, LSE IDEAS &amp; Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science</li> <li><b>Tan Sri Dr Munir Majid</b></li> </ul>

	President, ASEAN Business Club & Chairman, International Advisory Board, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific
6.00 pm - 6.30 pm	<p><b><u>Closing Address:</u></b></p> <p><b>The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP (TBC)</b> Prime Minister of the United Kingdom</p>

- The programme is tentative as of 1st December 2025
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