



Launched in April 2003, [ASEAN Business Advisory Council \(ASEAN-BAC\)](#) was formed following decision of the ASEAN Leaders at the 7th ASEAN Summit, with the mandate to provide private sector feedback and guidance to boost ASEAN's efforts towards economic integration.

Accordingly, ASEAN-BAC's activities are primarily focused on reviewing and identifying issues to facilitate and promote economic cooperation and integration. The Council also submits annual recommendations for the consideration of the ASEAN Leaders and the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM).

ASEAN-BAC's members are appointed by the Ministers in charge, and comprise of high-level CEOs of companies from each member country. Each country is represented by a maximum of three members, with one representing the interest of the small and medium-sized enterprises.

Change of ASEAN Chairmanship from Thailand to Vietnam



Hand over ceremony from Khun Arin Jira of ASEAN-BAC Thailand to Dr. Doan Duy Khuong of ASEAN-BAC Vietnam.

The 10 ASEAN members traditionally take turns chairing the regional grouping in alphabetical order, and Vietnam has formally took over as Chairman of ASEAN from Jan 1st, 2020. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of Vietnam's accession to ASEAN.

According to Dr. Doan Duy Khuong, Chairman of ASEAN-BAC Vietnam, the main theme of ASEAN-BAC 2020 this year is “Digital ASEAN for sustainable development”, following the theme of ASEAN-BAC 2019 “Empowering ASEAN 4.0”, emphasizing the impact of the digital age; linking the economic development with the social development: sustainable and inclusive. The theme also represents the pioneering of the business community: innovation, creativity, the responsibility for the sustainable development of the region.

“In particular, the main focus is to support and get prepared for the micro-small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the main economic drivers of ASEAN countries, to be ready to cope with the opportunities and challenges coming from the digital era and rapid change of business environment, to develop stronger and more sustainable. Supporting the digital transformation of MSMEs will also provide the equal opportunities for vulnerable groups such as women, young entrepreneurs, the poor, etc., and put people at the center, promote innovation and inclusive growth, so that no one will be left behind. These are also the goals of the ASEAN Digital Startup Legacy Project hosted by ASEAN-BAC in 2020” said by Mr. Pham Dinh Doan, Member of ASEAN-BAC Vietnam.

[**Click HERE for more info on ASEAN 2020 Vietnam’s Chairmanship**](#)

26th ASEAN Economic Ministers Retreat

March 10th | Da Nang, Vietnam

Vietnam's 12 priorities as ASEAN Chair in 2020 were approved by other member countries at the 26th ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Retreat and the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) Consultation Meeting on 10th of March 2020.

Member countries also agreed 62 measures to be prioritised in the ASEAN Agenda 2020. They included commodities commercialisation, facilitation of trade and skillful worker movement, one-stop shop ASEAN policies, the investment environment, competition policies, consumer protection, intellectual co-operation, electronic trade and boosting the role of small-medium-sized enterprises, as well as ASEAN globalisation.



From Left: Mr Gil Gonzales, Executive Director of ASEAN-BAC, Ms Jukhee Hong, Assistant Executive Director of ASEAN-BAC and National Staffer of ASEAN-BAC Malaysia, Dr. Doan Duy Khuong, Chairman of ASEAN-BAC Vietnam, Tran Tuan Anh, Minister of Industry and Trade Vietnam, Pak Bernardino Vega, Chairman of ASEAN-BAC Indonesia, Pak Maspiyono, Council Member of ASEAN-BAC Indonesia and Mr. Musa Adnin, Council Member of ASEAN-BAC Brunei.

Minister of Trade and Industry Trần Tuấn Anh announced the results of the AEM Retreat and ASEAN-BAC meeting at a press conference.

He said Việt Nam was focused on regional economic integration and connectivity, strengthening partnerships for peace and sustainable development, and enhancing the capacity and operational efficiency of ASEAN.

“This meeting provided an important chance to discuss the ASEAN Economic Community. Twelve out of the 13 priorities that Việt Nam proposed have been approved,” Anh said.

“The meeting once again strongly confirmed the central role of ASEAN in dealing with global challenges and trade tensions as well as threats of epidemics. The spread of COVID-19 has posed a problem for ASEAN, but it has also created opportunities for regional countries,” he said.

He said ministers of ASEAN countries also agreed to restructure supply chains to cope with the virus.

“We also discussed how the ASEAN will recover after COVID-19, and the need to build a sustainable growth model while boosting co-operation among ASEAN members and with partners including India, Canada, New Zealand and the UK after Brexit,” he said.

Anh also said six recommendations of the 37th High-level Task Force on ASEAN Economic Integration (HLTF-EI) Meeting in Hà Nội on February of 2020 were approved by ministers at the meeting. He said ASEAN ministers focused on restarting negotiations for the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) and co-operation with South Korea.

Public-private partnerships were also discussed at the ASEAN-BAC meeting on how to develop businesses. Boosting investment in ASEAN countries through trade and development of medium-and-small sized enterprises was the main focus of initiatives proposed at the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) Consultation Meeting.

The meeting also raised ideas on business development in the fields of electronic trade, tourism transport and logistics. Speaking at the press conference, ASEAN Secretary-General Lim Jock Hoi highly appreciated the efforts of ministers and representatives of ASEAN member countries.

“Despite the spread of COVID-19, participants worked hard to complete a very important agenda. I believe that economic engagements and negotiations will be finalised by the year end,” he said.

Relating to the ASEAN-India negotiations as part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the Vietnamese minister said more technical talks were needed to complete the agreement by November.

Representatives of ASEAN countries also discussed investment service regulations and a flexible open-door market policy among members and partners, including China, Japan, Korea, Australia, India and New Zealand. Ministers of ASEAN countries agreed to boost reforms and create a framework for closer connectivity and co-operation, diversifying supply chains and partnerships.

Participants said legal frameworks needed perfecting to boost the circulation of goods human resources and investment capital. Despite rapid growth in the past decades, the ASEAN economy was only valued at US\$3 trillion per year with 9.1 per cent growth, while commodities trade reached \$700 billion.

The ASEAN Economic Ministers Caucus Meeting on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was held on 11th March 2020.

Source: Vietnam News

ASEAN-BAC Malaysia Event

Luncheon Dialogue with Sarawak SMEs

February 20th | Kuching, Sarawak



ASEAN-BAC Malaysia Luncheon Dialogue with Sarawak SMEs at the Riverside Majestic Hotel, Kuching, Sarawak.

ASEAN-BAC Malaysia held a dialogue session with Sarawak SMEs in Kuching on the 20th February 2020. The dialogue was attended by about 70 participants, including representatives in Sarawak of SME Corporation, MITI, MATRADE and from the State Economic Planning Unit, a lively discussion followed on the future of business in

Sarawak in an environment of technological change but also from the development of the new Indonesian capital in Kalimantan and of Indonesia in general.

The issue of many existing institutions not engaging and providing sufficient information to business enterprises was raised, as well as that of existing regional arrangements such as BIMP-EAGA (Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area) not really being actively driven ahead.



From Left: Mr. Raja Singham, Council Member of ASEAN-BAC Malaysia & Tuan Haji Ismail Hashim, Director of SME Corp Sarawak.

The Director of SME Corp Sarawak, Tuan Haji Ismail Hashim made a substantial presentation on SME Corp. and the 177 programmes it has pursued in 2019 with a spend of RM13.8 billion. It was clear there are many opportunities for financing not sufficiently known or taken up by SMEs. Another matter raised was entrepreneur development which it was felt was lacking in Sarawak.

ASEAN-BAC council member, Mr. Raja Singham was able in his presentation to share his experience in building the BAC Education Group into one of the largest private education companies in the region and the guide posts, he argued, which should inform the journey to corporate success. He also offered to share the experiences and resources of his group with budding entrepreneurs from Sarawak.

Mr. Raja Singham is also the Malaysian lead mentor in ASEAN-BAC's ASEAN Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network (AMEN) programme and has provided the resources of his group to it.

Dr. Munir said that many of the issues raised were not strictly within the remit of ASEAN-BAC, but those that were, such as entrepreneurship development which can be partly addressed by the AMEN (ASEAN Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network) programme, which Mr. Raja Singham is actively involved in.

As a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Action Council (EAC), Dr. Munir also undertook to bring up some of the other issues at the national level.

During the ASEAN-BAC Malaysia Kuching visit, Dr. Munir paid a courtesy call on the Chief Minister of Sarawak Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg where he discussed some national economic issues as well as specific business initiatives that could be made in Sarawak.

He also visited Serba DigitalX in Kota Semarahan, an up and coming incubation centre which has taken up the Sarawak Chief Minister's call for a Digital Sarawak.

Click below to read more on the Media Coverage of ASEAN-BAC Malaysia Luncheon Dialogue :

1. [The Star](#)
2. [The Edge](#)
3. [New Straits Times](#)
4. [The Borneo Post](#)

ASEAN-BAC Malaysia Site Visit

Site Visit to D'Virtual Park

February 19th | Kota Samarahan, Kuching, Sarawak



ASEAN-BAC Malaysia Secretariat with Serba DigitalX Members and Crews.

ASEAN-BAC Malaysia visited the D'Virtual Park by Serba DigitalX in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak on the 19th February 2020.

Serba Dinamik Group Bhd in collaboration of Startup Borneo plans to launch D'Virtual Park, Malaysia's first virtual reality theme park which uses hologram technology next month. The collaboration will provide a huge networking opportunity for start-ups in the digital technology segment.

Tan Sri Munir Majid, Chairman of ASEAN-BAC Malaysia was welcomed by Mr. Abdul Qaiyum, Operation Manager of Serba Dinamik Group Sdn Bhd who is also the Founder of Startup Borneo on the exclusive tour of the nine blocks of three-storey buildings in Kota Samarahan.

The theme park is set to play an important role in digital technology to support the government's agenda in promoting digital economy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

[Click HERE for more info on Serba DigitalX](#)

ASEAN-BAC Meeting

83rd ASEAN-BAC Meeting

January 9th | Hanoi, Vietnam



83rd ASEAN-BAC Meeting was chaired by Dr. Doan Duy Khuong of Vietnam and co-chaired by Khun Arin Jira of Thailand

The 83rd ASEAN-BAC Meeting was held on 9th January 2020 at the BRG Legend Hill Golf Resort, Hanoi, Vietnam. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Doan Duy Khuong of Vietnam and co-chaired by Khun Arin Jira of Thailand.

The meeting was filled with discussion on the summary record of the previous meeting, report and assessment of 2019 Thai Chairmanship, 2nd ASEAN Integration Report 2019 (AIR 2019), ABAC Vietnam's Chairmanship updates, status and updates of ABAC Legacy Projects, introduction on ABAC Indonesia's new Council Members and other related matters.



ASEAN-BAC Council Members and Committee at the 83rd ASEAN-BAC Meeting.

Brief Report on ABIS/ABA and the Thai Chairmanship 2019

Khun Arin Jira highlighted the success of ASEAN Business and Investment Summit (ABIS) and ASEAN Business Awards (ABA) in November 2019, citing the unprecedented coffee-talk interview with the former Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. He also announced that the 6 Leaders attending ABIS was a great success.

[Click HERE to know more about ABIS 2019](#)

[Click HERE to know more about ABA 2019](#)

Assessment of Thai Chairmanship 2019

ASEAN-BAC Executive Director, Mr. Gil Gonzales presented his brief assessment of ASEAN-BAC's activities during 2019:

- AHEAD Legacy Project, a platform adopted by the government for 4IR and the creation of a working group.
- Focus on the 14 strategic areas that are cross cutting and sectoral issues, all with the common objectives to pursue reforms and empower ASEAN MSMEs.
- Still need to identify champions (internal or JBC partner) of each of the 14 sectors and cross cutting issues.

- Two important issues: 4IR and Sustainability, that needs to be included in all the above issues

Perspective on the Launching of the 2nd ASEAN Integration Report 2019 (AIR 2019)

Mr. Gonzales briefed the Council on his review of the 2nd AIR 2019, which represents a review of ASEAN priorities and what the Council can do to align with the government priorities. Highlights of his briefing included:

- ASEAN-BAC is involved in 17 or 61% of the total strategic areas in the AEC
- ASEAN-BAC is not involved in 11 or 39% of the total strategic areas in the AEC due to the lack of champions
- Basic Questions: Are we doing too many things? Or are we doing enough?

U Moe Kyaw of Myanmar agreed on the mounting numbers of work to do for ASEAN-BAC under the AEC. He brought up the importance of ASEAN-BAC ushering back ASEAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN CCI), since seven of the 10 AMS are already represented within it.

Tan Sri Munir Majid, Chairman of ASEAN-BAC Malaysia believed the issue with the ASEAN CCI is rather a complex matter, but supported substance work over what is represented. He brought up the G20 summit, which will take place on November in Riyadh and stressed the importance of ASEAN-BAC to speak to the Leaders prior to the summit to get their issues represented by the ASEAN Leaders in the November G20 Summit. Although Indonesia is the only ASEAN Member included in the G20, it is still important for ASEAN-BAC to try to get ASEAN issues to be discussed, such as free trade and rules-based order.

Tan Sri Munir stressed the need for ASEAN-BAC to bring these issues up with the Leaders and the officials in April. Other issues he believed are important include:

- Having the RCEP signed
- Strengthen relationship with China and bring up ASEAN issues, such as the correction of unfair trade with BRI
- Environmental protection caused by the BRI

[Click HERE to know more about AIR 2019](#)

ABAC Vietnam's Chairmanship Updates

Mr. Vu Anh Duc from Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) explained that the “Digital ASEAN for Sustainable Development” theme promotes a continuation of the innovation, creativity and sense of responsibility. The 2020 Legacy Project will be “Digital Startups Towards ASEAN Resilience and Sustainability” or Digital STARS.

Mr. Duc briefed the Council on ABIS 2020, whose key topics are as follow:

- Strengthening partnership for Sustainable Development
- Technology and Labor Development: Two key pillars of ASEAN 4.0
- Smart agriculture in 4IR
- Green growth and CSR
- Smart logistics in the development of smart cities
- ASEAN Digital Start-up Network

Mr. Duc also explained the Digital STARS Legacy Project, which aims to create an ASEAN-wide entrepreneurial and digital transformation enabling business environment, and facilitate the MSMEs' digital transformation to successfully startup, scale up and sustain their businesses. Its aimed outputs include:

- Policy recommendation on MSMEs digital transformation
- Sharing of best practices for digital startups and provide digital transformation solutions
- Introduction of innovative, affordable and available digital transformation solutions to MSMSEs

ABAC Legacy Projects Status

1. ASEAN-BAC Singapore (SGConnectTM, Digitize ASEAN Summit)

Dr. Robert Yap of Singapore updated on some of the cities chosen for the pilot in 2019 were Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Gaguig, and hope for 2020-2021 to expand to Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the CLM countries. In Vietnam,

SGConnect is in a joint venture with T&T Group to develop an international logistics center and an inland port.

2. ASEAN-BAC Philippines (Women in Business and AMEN)

Mr. Gil Gonzales updated on the end of Phase 1 of AMEN, which was piloted in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The first phase was a success and are now looking into continuing with Phase 2 where the project plans to launch in the rest of the seven countries. He also recognized the initiative in Cambodia, funded by their Young Entrepreneurs Association of Cambodia with their own AMEN Pilot run in Phnom Penh on October 2019.

3. ASEAN-BAC Malaysia (ASEAN Financial Inclusion Solution, MSME and Healthcare, APEC Chairmanship)

Tan Sri Munir updated that Malaysian Legacy Project has changed the name to ASEAN Financial Inclusion Solutions (AFIS) since GAX, the original fintech company running the legacy project, has switched to robo-advisory. Under this robo-advisory, one can open an online investment account for as little as USD \$50, with an average return rate of 7-9%.

4. ASEAN-BAC Thailand (AHEAD and Digital Trade Connect)

Khun Arin Jira informed that on AHEAD, he is in the process of assembling a working group. He plans to hold an AHEAD seminar on facing the 4IR around July 2020 and is currently working with the Ministry of Commerce on its realization. Locally, they are planning to hold 2 seminars in Thailand.

Khun Kobsak Duangdee of Thailand updated the Council on Digital Trade Connect Legacy Project, also known as the ASEAN Regional Digital Trade Transformation. Its purpose is to transform the end-to-end current practices and processes related to B2B international trade transaction from paper and manual processes to digital end-to-end by establishing the National Digital Trade Platform (NDTP) in each country

5. ASEAN-BAC Brunei (TVET)

YB Yanty Rahman of Brunei and Chair of the JBC TVET Working Group updated the Council on the ASEAN Future Workforce Council (AFWC). She updated on the activities by the AFWFC post August 2019 wherein she first presented on the

JBC Working Group, including presentations to the Vietnam Prime Minister, ASEAN Senior Official Meeting (SOM), and co-organized a TVET's Day with the theme of "Future Agenda for TVET" in Cambodia. Outside off ASEAN, she presented on "Seizing Possibilities for the Future in 4IR" in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

She highlighted some key priorities for 2020, while also planning to promote ASEAN Initiatives in TVET, which is included in the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025.

ABAC Indonesia's new Council Members

The Chair introduced and welcomed the newly appointed ASEAN-BAC Indonesia Members, who are as follow:

- Mr. Bernardino Vega, Country Chair, PT Pembangkit Energi Mandiri
- Mr. Adrian Gunadi, PT Investree Radhika Jaya
- Mr. Maspiyono, PT Mayora Indah Tbk

Click [HERE](#) to know more about ASEAN Mentorship for Entrepreneurs Network (AMEN)

Click [HERE](#) to know more about Digitize ASEAN 2019

Click [HERE](#) to know more about ASEAN Future Workforce Council