



**KEMENTERIAN KEWANGAN**

**LUNCH KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY  
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MINISTER OF FINANCE II**

**THE CEO SERIES 2026  
REINVENTING GROWTH: INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES IN ASEAN & MALAYSIA**

**12:15 P.M. | THURSDAY | 15 JANUARY 2026  
LE MÉRIDIEN, PETALING JAYA**

## **Bismillahirrahmanirrahim**

- YBhg Dato Jeffrey Ng Tiong Lip  
*Chairman of REHDA Institute*
- YBhg Datuk Ho Hon Sang  
*President of REHDA Malaysia*
- Your Excellencies and trade representatives
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh  
And Salam Malaysia MADANI

Ladies and gentlemen,

## I. A Journey Taken Together

1. It is a pleasure to join you today at the **tenth edition** of the CEO Series. I thank the **REHDA Institute** for the invitation, and for its continued leadership in convening the people who help shape the direction of our national development.
2. As I look around this room, I see more than corporate leaders. I see **partners in nation-building**, people who translate **plans into places, capital into communities**, and **ambition into assets** that endure.
3. We are standing at a significant moment in Malaysia's journey. The last two years mark a transition in how we govern and how we build. **2025 was a year of design and commitment**, where we clarified direction, re-centred policy around rakyat-first outcomes, and anchored Ekonomi MADANI as a governing philosophy.
4. Now, **2026 is the year of execution**. The government's reform and development agenda is in motion, and its effects are already being felt, by households, by businesses, and across the economy.

5. This momentum is underpinned by the beginning of the **Thirteenth Malaysia Plan (13MP)**, which sets the direction for a more resilient, high-value, and inclusive future.
6. At the Ministry of Finance, we often spend our days looking at the economy through the lens of numbers and fiscal frameworks. But the true pulse of a nation is found elsewhere.
7. It is reflected in the **physical progress** we see around us, homes built for families, industrial parks fostering new technologies, and infrastructure that brings people and markets closer together.
8. In my experience, both in the private sector and in government, I have learned that the most enduring transformations are never driven by numbers alone. They are guided by a **shared sense of purpose**.
9. This is the essence of the **Ekonomi MADANI** framework. It defines **not only the pace of our growth, but the character of our nation**.
10. In this journey, **real assets and the real estate ecosystem that delivers them, are essential. A nation's ambition is only as credible as the assets that support it.**
11. **Policy provides direction. Capital provides fuel. But in this Year of Execution, it is real assets that provide the foundation.**

## II. The Anchor of a Nation: The JS-SEZ as a Living Blueprint

12. They form the bridge between a policy written in Putrajaya and prosperity experienced by a family in Johor, a student in Kuala Lumpur, or a manufacturer in Penang. They are the quiet enablers of national potential.
13. This is not unique to Malaysia. Across the world, countries that have successfully reinvented themselves understood that the future does not emerge from incentives and regulations alone; it must be built into ecosystems where people can **work, live, innovate, and invest with confidence**.
14. One example is **Pangyo Techno Valley in Korea**. Not long ago, this was agricultural land on the outskirts of Seoul.
15. The vision however, was not merely to construct offices space. It was to design the **hardware for a software-driven future** by integrating R&D, talent, and livability into a coherent innovation ecosystem.
16. We see a similar principle at work in tourism and place-making. In China, districts like **West Lake in Hangzhou**, or the curated water towns of **Wuzhen**, were not just preservation projects.
17. They were strategic developments that transformed heritage into **experience-led assets**, with **resilient, recurring income**.
18. Malaysia is now witnessing the birth of a transformative blueprint of our own, the **Johor–Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ)**.

19. It is more than a cluster of projects. It is a living, cross-**border ecosystem** that brings together Johor's **industrial strength** with Singapore's **financial depth** with global connectivity.
20. We are creating not just asset, but **a new regional identity**.
21. Developments such as these- in Korea, China, or here in Johor, do more than just lift the GDP figures. **They reshape the national narrative.**
22. They demonstrate that when a nation aligns its physical assets with its ambitions, **the gains are broader, deeper, and more enduring, felt through jobs, industries, and generations.**
23. As we embark on the 13MP, this is precisely the alignment we seek to deepen across Malaysia: **industrial ecosystems** to host advanced manufacturing and innovation; **data-ready landbanks** to anchor the digital economy; and **mixed-use developments** that support productivity, livability, and long-term resilience.
24. **This is a nation in motion - building with purpose, where growth is felt by the Rakyat.**

### **III. GEAR-uP: The Engine of Our Shared Journey**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

25. I know that many of you in this room are already navigating the new economy, pivoting towards **recurring income, wellness districts,**

and **data-centre landbanks**, while managing a more complex global landscape.

26. In this environment, the government's responsibility is to provide steadfast **stability and clarity**, so that long-term commitments decisions can be made with confidence.
27. This is the philosophy that underpins the **Government-Linked Enterprises Activation and Reform Programme (GEAR-uP)**. Through GEAR-uP, the government is working with our **Government-Linked Investment Companies (GLICs)** to mobilise an additional **RM120 billion** in domestic investment over the next five years.
28. Our intention is straightforward: to ensure **national capital** serve the national **interest**, deployed in a **catalytic manner to** anchor the **high-growth and high-value** industries that will define our future.
29. For the leaders in this room, from the bankers who finance these visions to the developers who deliver them, GEAR-uP is a signal of the government's commitment to being a **long-term partner**.
30. **We want investment to be anchored here, in our own soil, creating value that remains a lasting benefit for the Malaysian people.**
31. **We are not seeking capital that merely visits. We seek capital that builds stays and endures.**

#### IV. Visit Malaysia Year 2026: Hosting the World with Excellence

32. Looking ahead, we approach a major milestone: **Visit Malaysia Year 2026**.
33. The targets are ambitious, **47 million visitors and RM329 billion** in tourism revenue, reflecting the scale of opportunity for jobs, SMEs, and local communities across Malaysia.
34. For the property and hospitality sectors, this is an opportunity to view assets through the lens of the **experience economy**.
35. We are seeing a shift away from a “rooms-first” model toward **experience-led destinations**, places that offer visitors a genuine connection to our **culture, heritage, and natural beauty**.
36. This is why the rejuvenation of our most storied landmarks matters. Sites like **Carcosa Seri Negara, Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad,** and **Stadium Merdeka** are more than monuments to the past. They are **high-value national assets** that hold our collective memory, identity, and our sense of continuity as a nation.
37. The purpose of initiatives like **Warisan Kuala Lumpur** is not merely to preserve these structures, but to **reimagine** them, as living parts of our economy and national story, assets with **enduring and resilient value**.
38. Visit Malaysia Year 2026 is not only about welcoming more visitors, it is about welcoming them better. Through thoughtful design, service

excellence, and care, we will present the very best of Malaysia. **How we host the world is how the world learns who we are.**

## **V. The Human Element: Talent and Growth**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

39. Every journey, no matter how well-planned, ultimately depends on the capability of its people. Earlier today, this conference witnessed the launch of the **REHDA Institute's Youth Initiative (RIYI)**, in collaboration with several university partners.
40. While my colleague, **YB Anthony Loke**, had the honour of witnessing that launch, I wish to underscore the importance of such industry-led efforts.
41. This initiative strengthens the **education–industry linkage**, ensuring the next generation of architects, engineers, and property managers is prepared not just to build, but to build well, across **cycles**, **standards**, and an increasingly demanding economic landscape.
42. **This, too, reflect the spirit of Ekonomi MADANI: an economy that invests in its people, so our people can invest their talent and energy back into Malaysia.**

## VI. A Shared Aspiration

Ladies and Gentlemen,

43. The journey before us is a long one, but it is a journey we undertake together. **Ekonomi MADANI is our vision. The Thirteenth Malaysia Plan is our map. And in this year of execution, real assets are the anchor that makes our ambition credible.**
44. The government's role is as an enabler, to provide **fiscal stability**, strategic initiatives like **GEAR-uP**, and the infrastructure that allows your creativity and enterprise to flourish. The innovation, the risk-taking, and the courage to build, however, lie with you- the leaders in this room.
45. As you continue your discussions today, I invite you to view each project not only as a commercial outcome, but as a contribution to the Malaysia we are shaping together.
46. In the end, we are building more than real assets. We are laying the foundation for a **high-income and dignified future**, one where our youth find opportunity at home, and where global investors recognise Malaysia as a place of **quality, stability, and long-term value.**
47. **Together, we are not only building Malaysia. We are shaping Malaysia's future: more confident, more resilient, and more capable of determining its own destiny.**

Wabillahi Taufik Wal Hidayah, Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi  
Wabarakatuh.

Thank you.