

## **Australian Business in ASEAN Survey 2025**

Dr. Kenji Kong Weng Keat, chair of the Johor Chapter of the Malaysia Australia Business Council (MABC) says that, according to the preliminary analysis of the Australian Business in Southeast Asia Survey for 2025, 70% of Southeast Asia respondents are likely to consider the integration of the ASEAN economy as vital to their businesses in the region. Dr. Kong showed and provided opinions on the survey conducted by AustCham, in collaboration with RMIT with the support of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He states that over 30% of the survey respondents expect revenues from Asean to grow significantly by more than 10% every year for the next 5 years.

Kong's analysis suggests that the survey's results are encouraging. He says that 41% of the surveyed businesses operate in Malaysia. In addition, 32% of respondents said that Malaysia is one of the target investment expansion markets. Kong observes, "From 2023 to 2024, Malaysia was Australia's second-largest trading partner in the Asean region, with total bilateral trade worth \$32 billion."

In his report on the results, Kong notes that the primary obstacles to trade in Southeast Asia are the lack of skilled workers, high levels of bureaucracy, poor governance, and, most importantly, corruption.

Kong concluded, "Trade potential and prospects for growth is linked to the degree of integration of the regional Asean markets, as equitable, market-friendly, and pro-trade governance, good quality public infrastructure, and a skilled workforce are essential."

"Johor needs better speed and transparency with regulatory processes, digital energy infrastructure, better optimized freight and last mile logistics. Systems need to be in place to offer cross boarder mobility for skilled workers to make hiring and relocation of staffing more efficient."

The 2026 Australian Business in Southeast Asia Survey is well underway and is an important regional research initiative. Now in its tenth year, the survey remains the most comprehensive annual assessment of Australian business sentiment across ASEAN. The results are used directly by Australian government agencies, trade commissioners, and policymakers to understand the priorities and challenges facing Australian businesses operating in the region.