



Malaysia This Week in Asia / Economics

Malaysia trade minister urges Asean centrality, cooperation: 'we will all be winners'

Speaking at the Hong Kong-Asean Summit 2024, Malaysia's Tengku Zafrul Aziz says global businesses need 'neutral' Asean as a partner

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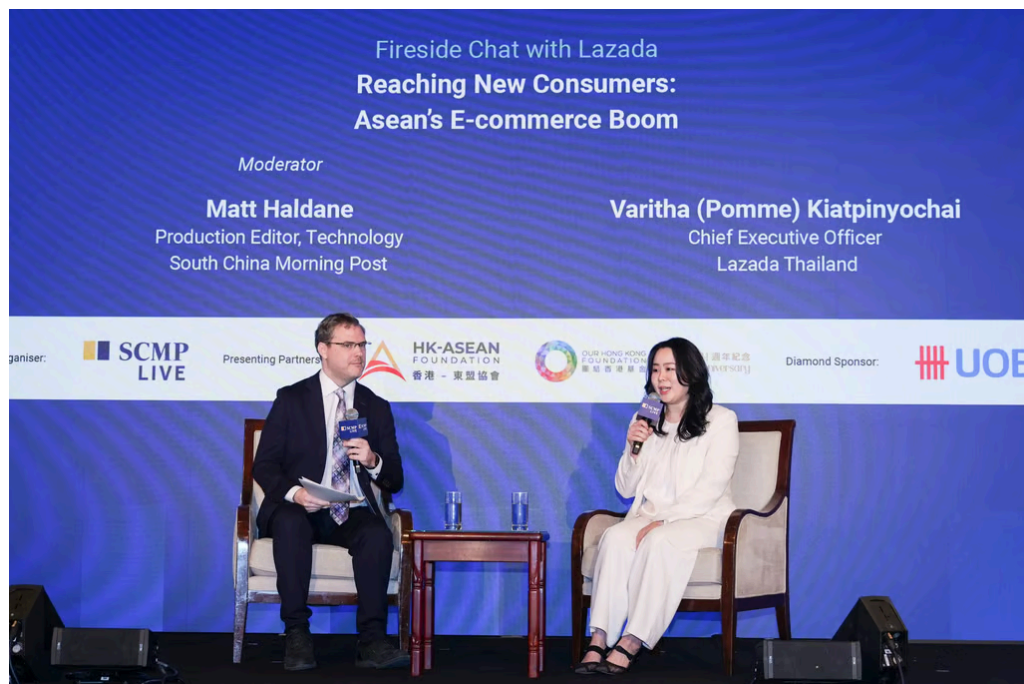
[Asean](#) needs to deepen its commitment to centrality while fostering engagement with external trading partners, including a plan to upgrade its free trade agreement with [China](#), [Malaysia](#)'s trade minister has said.

"It will not be an easy task politically – in the long run we will all be winners, but some will win more than others," Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Zafrul Aziz said on Friday.

"But this is far better for Asean's aggregate good than for everyone to compete on their own and losing alone," he added, referring to the 10-member

Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Zafrul was speaking at the Hong Kong-Asean Summit 2024 organised by the South China Morning Post in partnership with the Hong Kong-Asean Foundation and the Our Hong Kong Foundation.



Matt Haldane (left), South China Morning Post's Production Editor for Technology, and Varitha (Pomme) Kiatpinyochai (right), Chief Executive Officer of Lazada Thailand, at The Hong Kong-Asean Summit 2024, held at the Conrad Hotel in Admiralty on Friday. Photo: Eugene Lee

At a luncheon event at the end of the summit, Zafrul also discussed Malaysia's coming chairmanship of Asean in 2025, noting that there have been discussions for an upgraded FTA between China and Asean.

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