

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

ASEAN Youth Fellowship 2025 Empowers Young Leaders to Shape ASEAN's Inclusive and Sustainable Future

Singapore / Kuala Lumpur, 20 November 2025 – With over 213 million young people, ASEAN's youth are not only a powerful demographic but a vital force for regional peace and progress. Their growing role in advancing inclusion, sustainability, and regional cooperation was affirmed in the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation's recent *Regional Study on Youth, Peace and Security*¹.

The ASEAN Youth Fellowship (AYF) builds on the momentum of the study's findings – empowering emerging leaders across the region to drive regional cooperation, champion diversity, and help shape a resilient future for ASEAN.

Now in its seventh edition, AYF 2025 convened 42 emerging leaders from across Southeast Asia for a programme held from 7 to 14 November 2025 in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Co-organised by the National Youth Council (NYC) Singapore and the Singapore International Foundation (SIF), the Fellowship continues to nurture a vibrant network of changemakers committed to cross-sector collaboration.

In alignment with the ASEAN Chairmanship theme for 2025, "Inclusivity and Sustainability", Fellows took part in meaningful dialogues and exchanges on strengthening regional cooperation in key areas such as sustainability, digital innovation, inclusive leadership, and community resilience. These issues reflect ASEAN's shared regional priorities – addressing climate change, narrowing the digital divide, and building inclusive and resilient communities amid global uncertainty.

Throughout the week-long programme, participants engaged with regional leaders and policymakers on the themes of future-ready leadership, innovation, and building trust across borders. Highlights included a dialogue with Mr Gan Kim Yong, Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry, where Fellows explored strategies for shaping a resilient and forward-looking ASEAN. They also engaged in a session with Malaysia's Minister of Communications YB Datuk Fahmi Fadzil on the future of the region and navigating the region's digital society. These high-level exchanges underscored the Fellowship's role in connecting youth with policymakers, contributing perspectives that could help shape regional policies and solutions.

Participants also visited organisations in Singapore and Malaysia that are advancing sustainable development and digital transformation. These included Punggol Digital District, Singapore's first

¹ Source: ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR), *Regional Study on Youth, Peace and Security*, 2025. Available [here](#).

smart district housing sustainable tech-focused firms, and URBANICE Malaysia, a centre of excellence under the Ministry of Housing and Local Government focused on sustainable urban development and inclusive city planning.

In Kuala Lumpur, Fellows also took part in cultural immersion activities to deepen their appreciation of ASEAN's diversity and shared values. These included a guided tour of Chinatown and a visit to PARC (*Project A Reka Cipta*), a sustainability-driven community hub in Subang Jaya whose mission is to cultivate sustainable lifestyles, celebrate diversity, and nurture communities that care for both people and the planet.

Beyond the immersive experience, the Fellowship strengthens participants' understanding of ASEAN's shared priorities and equips them with the skills and network to lead cross-sector collaborations. Fellows are encouraged to translate their insights into action through policy, enterprise, or community partnerships that contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable ASEAN.

"AYF gave me an opportunity to understand how important it is for ASEAN youth to move beyond dialogue and co-create practical solutions," said Ms Serene Cai, Co-founder and Commercial Head, Speedoc, a Fellow from Singapore. "Seeing how different sectors approach sustainability and innovation, and gaining insights from my new ASEAN friends, showed me new ways I can make a difference to support various communities in Singapore and abroad."

"It was especially meaningful for us to experience AYF in Kuala Lumpur during Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship," said Ms Chow Shenn Kuan, Strategy and Advocacy Manager of Education, Yayasan Hasanah, a Fellow from Malaysia. "The discussions reminded me that collaboration across borders starts with understanding one another's perspectives. AYF provides a platform for young leaders to learn from each other, forge genuine friendships, and act together for the region's future."

"Participating in AYF has been a deeply meaningful and uplifting journey for me as a representative of Timor-Leste, now proudly standing as ASEAN's 11th member. My time in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur strengthened my belief that sustainability and innovation can work hand in hand to build a stronger, more resilient future," said Mr Ezequiel Fátima Ferreira Soares, Coordinator - Rural Development (Agriculture), Australian Embassy Dili, Timor-Leste, a Fellow from Timor-Leste. "Most importantly, hearing from visionary leaders and connecting with passionate young changemakers from across ASEAN reinforced my conviction that real impact begins when we bring these ideas home and transform them into meaningful action for our communities."

"The Fellowship showed me that ASEAN's diversity is our greatest strength," said Mr Mohammad Naufal, Founder and CEO, Carbon Addons, a Fellow from Indonesia. "When we share experiences and learn from one another, we not only understand our region better but also build the trust needed to work together for long-term progress. As youth leaders, we hold a critical role in driving a more sustainable and inclusive future for ASEAN."

The Fellowship's growing network of more than 280 Fellows continues to drive meaningful change across borders. Fellows are actively collaborating on initiatives in areas such as education, digital inclusion, and sustainability, translating the connections and trust built through AYF into long-term partnerships.

Beyond the programme, AYF seeks to nurture a generation of leaders committed to shaping a more inclusive and resilient ASEAN by encouraging Fellows to further their collaboration, where they can

tap on the AYF Impact Fund for their ground-up initiatives. The fund provides S\$5,000 for each Fellow's initiative, or up to S\$20,000 for each project that Fellows organise as a team.

Mr David Chua, Chief Executive of NYC, said: "Singapore is taking tangible action through platforms like AYF to support youth leaders across ASEAN to come together to strengthen mutual understanding and relationships in a world bifurcated by divisions and trust deficits, as they will be the ones to shape ASEAN and address its most pressing challenges."

Ms Corinna Chan, Chief Executive Officer of SIF, said: "Youth make up one-third of ASEAN's population – a demographic dividend that holds immense potential to shape the region's future. Their collective energy and purpose give us confidence in the future of ASEAN, and we remain committed to nurturing this growing network of changemakers who are building a more inclusive, sustainable and united region. The ASEAN Youth Fellowship has become a catalyst for collaboration. What continues to inspire us is how our Fellows remain connected and committed long after the programme ends, working together to uplift communities and address shared challenges in the region."

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About the National Youth Council Singapore

At NYC, we believe in a world where young people are respected and heard and have the ability to influence and make a difference in the world. Together with our partners, we develop future-ready youth who are committed to Singapore by instilling in them a heart for service, resilience and an enterprising spirit.

About the Singapore International Foundation

The Singapore International Foundation aims to build eco-systems to catalyse change for a better world. We bring together people from the public, private, and philanthropic sectors across countries to harness the collective strength that is needed to address shared environmental and social challenges. Our work is focused in the areas of climate, culture, digital, education, health, justice, and youth. We believe that cross-boundary collaboration is critical to foster sustainable solutions in an interconnected world. Find out more at www.sif.org.sg

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Photos and Captions



This year's ASEAN Youth Fellows at the welcome ceremony for the ASEAN Youth Fellowship 2025, with Guest of Honour Ms Goh Hanyan, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth & Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment.



Dialogue with Mr Gan Kim Yong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry, where the ASEAN Youth Fellows were engaged in discussions on shaping a future-ready ASEAN.



ASEAN Youth Fellows visited Punggol Digital District in Singapore, master planned and developed by JTC Corporation, which integrates smart urban planning, sustainability, and digital innovation in a real-world setting.



ASEAN Youth Fellows participating in a cultural tour at Chinatown in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



Minister of Communications, YB Datuk Fahmi Fadzil engaged in a dialogue session with ASEAN Youth Fellows to discuss navigating the region's digital society.



At PARC, a co-created space in Subang Jaya that champions environmental stewardship, shared ownership, and social connection, ASEAN Youth Fellows were immersed in various activities that encourage cultivating sustainable lifestyles.



ASEAN Youth Fellows on a guided tour of redeveloped locations, catalysed by URBANICE Malaysia and its partners, showcasing sustainable urban design and community-driven efforts that contribute to a more inclusive and liveable city.