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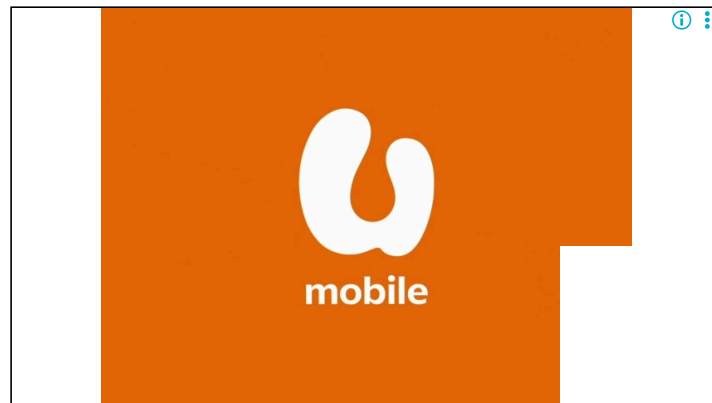
GLOBAL NEWS

Thai-Cambodian relapse is one of many border disputes: ASEAN's ongoing role in regional stability remains central

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THE [border clash](#) between Thailand and Cambodia—characterized by military engagement and accusations—has raised concerns in Southeast Asia.

AI Brief

- Most ASEAN border disputes remain non-violent, managed through legal and diplomatic mechanisms.
- Thai-Cambodian escalation is exceptional, driven by elections, symbolic terrain, and political stress.
- Malaysia's peace role and ASEAN stability remain intact despite this isolated relapse.

However, this violence is just one of many [ASEAN border disputes](#)—most remain non-violent, well-managed, and far from the current escalation.

ASEAN is a [region shaped by colonial borders](#), shifting rivers, overlapping historical memories, and competing

maritime claims. Disputes exist almost everywhere—on land, at sea, and along riverbanks. But they rarely erupt into full confrontation. What is happening between Thailand and Cambodia is not the norm, and it should not be interpreted as evidence of a wider regional unravelling.

In fact, the escalation is a product of unique conditions tied specifically to Bangkok and Phnom Penh.

Thailand is heading toward a [general election in early 2026](#), burdened by public [pressures arising from devastating floods](#) and governance challenges. Cambodia, meanwhile, is navigating [sensitive political transitions](#) and historical narratives tied to border sovereignty.

With both capitals tense, even minor incidents—such as [a landmine](#), an errant patrol, or a misunderstood movement—can quickly escalate to military action. The symbolic and [fortified Preah Vihear](#) area heightens this risk.

This combination of political timing, symbolic geography, and military proximity makes the Thai–Cambodian case exceptional in ASEAN, not representative.

Most ASEAN Border Disputes Follow a Very Different Pattern

Across Southeast Asia, border disputes typically remain [non-violent](#) because mechanisms exist—whether legal, diplomatic, or technical—to prevent miscalculations from turning kinetic.

On land disputes, [Thailand and Laos](#) manage their land boundaries through committees and avoid troop build-ups. Vietnam and Cambodia [resolve overlapping posts through surveys](#), not artillery.

In river disputes, the [Laos–Thailand Mekong](#) boundary dispute focuses on shifting channels and requires joint technical studies. [Malaysia and Indonesia address internal river issues in Sabah–Kalimantan](#) through policing, not militarisation.

Also, for maritime disputes, Malaysia and Indonesia, despite [tensions in Ambalat](#) also known as Sulawesi Sea, rely on coast guards and diplomatic notes.

Singapore and Malaysia's Pedra Branca dispute went to the [International Court of Justice](#) and never escalated into military conflict.

The Philippines and Malaysia have [long disagreed over Sabah](#), but both avoid provoking a naval confrontation, and overlapping claims in the [South China Sea](#) and the Gulf of Thailand remain peacefully managed.

These disputes are real and significant, but they are resolved through procedural channels, not through explosive military action.

ASEAN, above all, remains a region where disagreements exist, but war is decisively absent.

Malaysia's Role Must Not Be Questioned Because of One Relapse

The relapse along the Thai–Cambodian border must not be misread as a failure of Malaysia's facilitative leadership, particularly under Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. The [Kuala Lumpur Peace Accord](#) (KL Accord) provided a framework for de-escalating tensions, establishing monitoring mechanisms, and preventing misunderstandings from spiralling out of control.

But no peace mechanism—whether Malaysian, ASEAN, or even UN-led—can prevent a clash sparked in seconds by a miscommunication along a heavily militarised frontier. [Verification teams](#) cannot teleport to sites within minutes; they require time, access, and safety to conduct forensics.

To assign blame to Malaysia for events driven by Bangkok's election cycle, Cambodia's sensitive political landscape,

and the symbolism of the Dangrek mountains is wholly unfounded and must be rejected outright.

Malaysia's resolve must remain intact.

[Malaysia's credibility in peace facilitation](#) remains beyond question.

And ASEAN still depends on Malaysia to provide the diplomatic "quiet space" where dialogue continues despite battlefield noise.

Why the Thai–Cambodian Relapse Does Not Threaten ASEAN's Stability

ASEAN's strength lies not in preventing the first shot but in stopping escalation.

While the Thai–Cambodian situation is alarming, it does not signal systemic failure for several reasons.

First, other disputes show no signs of copycat escalation.

Second, no other border today carries the same layered symbolism as Preah Vihear.

Third, other ASEAN states are not undergoing simultaneous political stress.

Fourth, most disputes [involve coast guards](#), police, or technical surveyors—not standing armies.

Lastly, ASEAN's capability to contain disputes, maintain open dialogue, and prevent regional conflict is robust and proven.

Conclusion: One Violent Relapse Must Not Overshadow a Region That Has Largely Avoided War

The Thai–Cambodian border dispute is serious, but it cannot and will not define ASEAN's reality.

It is an exception driven by unique timing, symbolic terrain, and political vulnerability.

Most ASEAN border disputes remain peaceful—and that is an achievement built over decades of restraint, diplomacy, and regional interdependence. [Malaysia, under Anwar Ibrahim's leadership](#), plays a central role in upholding this equilibrium.

That relapse must not, under any circumstances, be allowed to tarnish Malaysia's role.

Malaysia must stay the course.

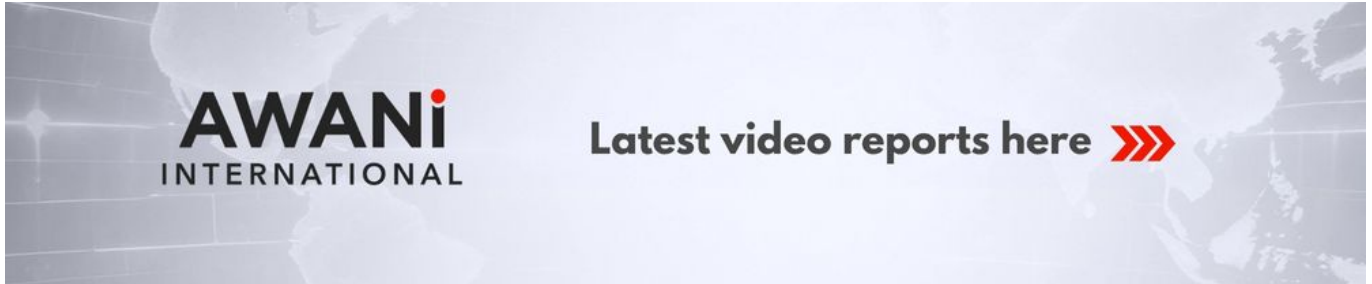
ASEAN now demands Malaysia's steady hand more than ever before.

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