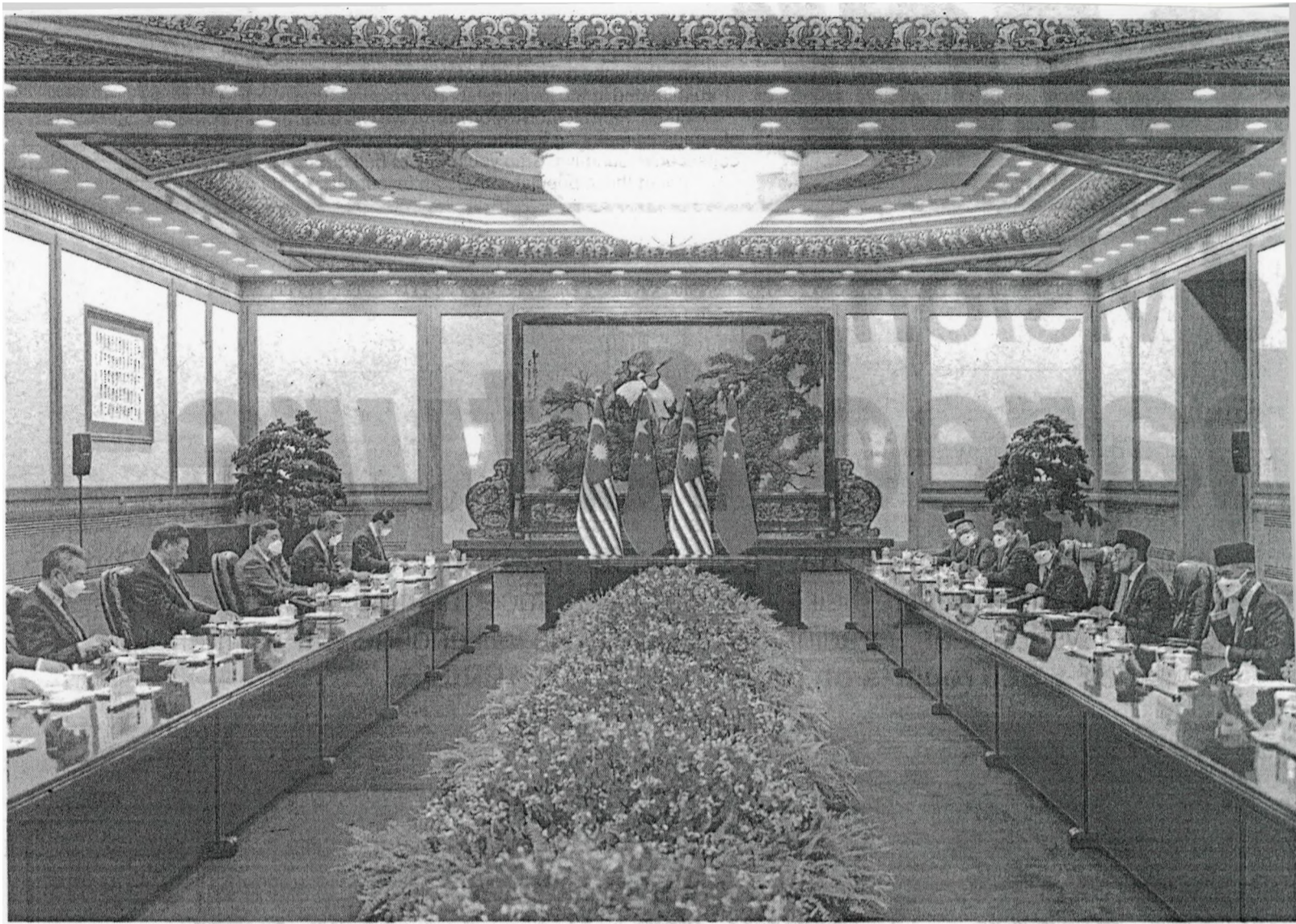


Shared vision, shared future

Malaysia and China can build a community and have a shared future, say Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and President Xi Jinping after their first ever face-to-face meeting. Anwar also says that China is a friend to Malaysia, but as a trading nation, Malaysia will engage with all friendly countries > **See reports on page 2 by PAUL GABRIEL**





Honoured: Anwar (second from right) and Xi (second from left) exchanging views at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. — Prime Minister's Office

'An important neighbour'

Anwar: M'sia will engage with China, US while retaining sovereignty

By PAUL GABRIEL
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BEIJING: Ahead of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and China, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has stressed that China is an important neighbour.

"As a trading nation, Malaysia needs to be friends with all countries. I do not see any threat from China," he said.

He added that Malaysia would continue to engage with countries friendly to us, and this meant engaging both China and the United States.

"China is an important neighbour and the United States is a friendly nation to us. I am not against anybody.

"I do not see any threat from China. But nobody should dictate terms to us, and we will maintain this position. As a free and independent nation, we will decide what is best for us.

"International diplomacy has changed in that no one country can dictate terms. I'm not pessimistic by nature ... I'm an optimist," he said during a Q&A session at China's top-ranked Tsinghua University here yesterday.

Anwar was responding to a question on Malaysia and the trade rivalry between the United States

and China.

China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner since 2009.

Total trade between the two countries in 2022 was RM487.13bil.

Earlier, in a speech at the university, Anwar said leaders must challenge the norm by thinking anew during periods of uncertainty.

Channelling WB Yeats's classic poem *The Second Coming*, the Prime Minister said that usually "when things fell apart, the centre cannot hold".

"We need leaders to be visionary and more creative. Take climate change as an example. No country can escape its calamity," he said.

Citing President Xi Jinping as a leader who impressed him, Anwar said China had developed greatly under the former's foresight.

"He has done this by going well beyond the normal mode of thinking, by taking into account issues of humanity and civilisation.

"It is not just about economic reform but justice for all its citizens, too. If you do not spur economic growth, one cannot share wealth, you can only share poverty.

"This is also what Malaysia Madani is all about. As a small country, Malaysia cannot do everything on its own. We need to be interconnected in order to learn from each other," he added.

Anwar said he had benefited

greatly from the teachings of Chinese philosophers Confucius and Mencius.

"Legacy is important. We must always accept the immense contributions made in the past and learn from them. But do not forget the challenges of the present day," he told his audience.

He also commended the university, founded in 1911, for its achievements and noted that the largest number of foreign students was from Malaysia.

"Education is vital to any society wishing to exist beyond its present generation. Universities provide a battleground of ideas, where thoughts are crafted, challenged and refined. Civilisation takes its origins from here," he added.

Anwar, who is on Ms maiden visit to China as Prime Minister, later paid a call on Xi at the Great Hall of the People, located next to Tiananmen Square.

This is where the Two Sessions - the meetings of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, dubbed China's parliament - is held annually.

The hall is also used to receive VIPs including heads of state and foreign leaders, among other important events.

Both leaders exchanged views on a wide range of issues, taking into

account the latest international developments as they focused on the direction of the almost 50-year bilateral relationship.

Anwar also met with the Chairman of the National People's Congress, Zhao Leji.

He is being accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir, International Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz, Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Local Government Development Minister Nga Kor Ming, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Chang Lih Kang, Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing and MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong.

A 200-member trade delegation is also part of the group, with an all-important Malaysia-China Business Forum and roundtable meeting with high-profile investors and captains of industry scheduled today.

Anwar is scheduled to hold talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang later in the day, after which both leaders will witness the signing of several MOUs.