

Anwar charts path for Asean-Japan partnership

TOKYO: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has proposed four areas of cooperation to expand and deepen collaboration within Asean to empower its people to be resilient and better able to address future challenges.

He pointed out to Asean leaders and host Japan during the Asean-Japan Commemorative Summit here yesterday that the four areas were public health, climate action, disaster management and people-to-people exchanges.

Anwar said drawing from the lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic, Asean and Japan must remain vigilant against future health crises.

He said as the region moves towards operationalising the Asean Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases, Malaysia proposed that Asean member states and Japan place researchers at the centre.

"We should bring together researchers from diverse backgrounds, experience and know-how to form a team that could

help better address future health challenges," he said in his remarks during the third agenda, themed "Heart to Heart Partners Across Generations".

On climate action, he said Asean and Japan should continue to work closely to advance regional and national mitigation and adaptation strategies.

"Delaying these risks will worsen the irreversible impact of climate change, a reality already experienced by some," Anwar said, Bernama reported.

Asean and Japan should seize on the momentous outcome of COP28, especially on the Global Stocktake, Global Goal on Adaptation and the loss and damage fund, he added.

"I welcome (Japan) Prime Minister (Fumio) Kishida's early commitment of US\$10mil for the latter, and I encourage Japan to do more in assisting developing countries with energy transition in a just, orderly and equitable manner," Anwar said.

The Prime Minister said the

region has seen a recent surge in extreme weather events, from droughts to floods as well as landslides, which called for his third point: disaster management.

He said this is why Malaysia values Japan's contribution to operationalising the Asean Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre).

Anwar called for deeper collaboration with Japan in ongoing efforts to establish Permanent Disaster Relief Centres, capitalising on Japan's extensive experience and expertise in disaster risk reduction.

In bringing the people of the region together, Malaysia appreciated Japan's initiatives such as Jenesysl (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths), which help to bridge cultural divides and foster a sense of shared identity.

On Malaysia's part, he said the country would encourage students from all Asean member

states to choose Japan's University of Tsukuba's branch campus in Malaysia to pursue their tertiary education.

Anwar said Malaysia welcomes Japan's new initiative of "Partnership to Cocreate a Future with the Next Generation".

Following these proposals, the leaders adopted a vision statement and an implementation plan that focused on future cooperation under the theme of co-creation, concluding the summit.

The commemorative summit was co-chaired by Kishida, as the host, and Indonesian President Joko Widodo.

Separately at the first agenda of the summit - themed "Review of Asean-Japan Relations" - Anwar said Malaysia encourages further Asean-Japan collaboration to elevate cybersecurity standards in the South-East Asian region by sharing best practices. He said with the expansion of the digital landscape, cyber threats are increasing exponentially.

"Together, we must prioritise

the protection of our citizens from cyber exploitation related to terrorism, trafficking-in-persons, and various cyber and transnational crimes," he said.

He said Japan could share with Asean its knowledge and skills focusing on areas such as intellectual property protection, data privacy and threat intelligence.

Pursuant to the Asean-Japan Special Meeting of Justice Ministers in July, which was co-hosted by Malaysia and Japan, Anwar said Malaysia encouraged Asean and Japan to develop educational initiatives.

This could help promote understanding among the people on the values that constitute our laws and legal systems as well as international law, he added.

Over the years, Anwar said, Asean-Japan relations had grown exponentially across the three pillars.

"As we mark 50 years of relations, we established the Asean-Japan Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," he added.