

Focus on economy in 2024

PM: High foreign investment interest expected to spur growth

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PUTRAJAYA: With the economy being his top priority for 2024, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is optimistic that Malaysia will see stronger economic growth next year, judging from the interest shown by foreigners to invest here.

It would not be a surprise to see a record in terms of investment in the country at the rate things were going, the Prime Minister said.

"I must say that (investment) interest is higher than before. There is a strong interest in Malaysia," he said at a dialogue with chief editors and senior editors of print, electronic and online media at Seri Perdana yesterday.

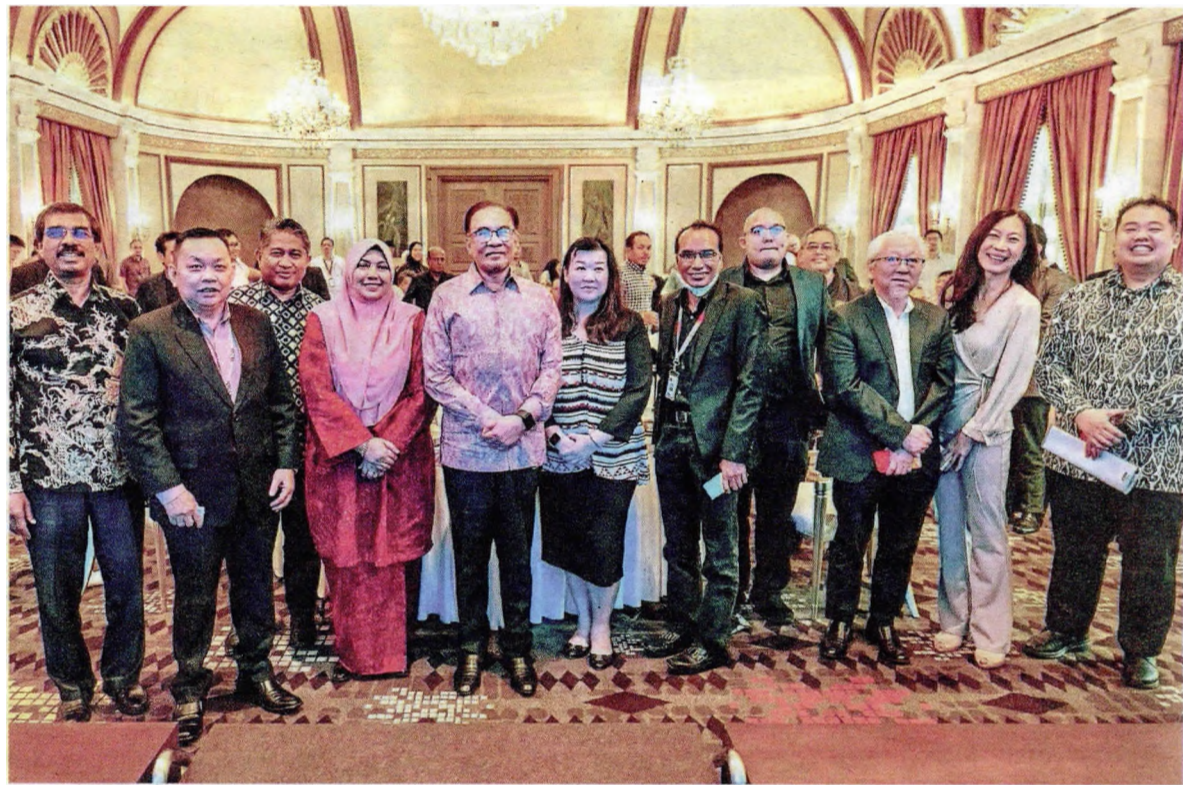
Malaysia has secured significant potential investments this year, including RM6.56bil from Japanese firms during the Prime Minister's visit to Japan last week.

And last month when Anwar was in the United States, he revealed that Malaysia secured a total of RM63.02bil in proposed investments mainly from technology giants there.

Anwar, however, acknowledged that more must be done to boost efficiency, cut bureaucracy, ensure speed in approvals and to look at ease of doing business to further attract investments.

Aside from ensuring that the quality of training including those provided under TVET, he said that courses under new disciplines such as technology and artificial intelligence must also be provided so that the workforce would meet the skills requirements needed by investors.

"Next year will be about the economy, economy and economy. And we are able to focus more on the economy because there is political stability," he said, when



All smiles: Anwar posing for a group photo at a dialogue in Seri Perdana, Putrajaya. On his left is SMG chief content officer Datin Paduka Esther Ng. — Picture courtesy of Anwar's Facebook

asked about his top priorities next year.

To a question, the Prime Minister said Malaysia, despite its close relations with China, also maintained good diplomatic and investment relations with the United States.

"China is our neighbour and a superpower. We have good relations with them and they too have good relations with us.

"If they (China) have problems with the United States, we do not interfere. Malaysia cannot go into war with others. We want to have good ties with everyone," he said when asked whether Malaysia's close relations could possibly upset the United States.

Anwar also said that the "Look

East Policy" should also now include China, given its current economic strength.

"When the policy began, China's economy was gloomy and was not where it is now. Today, it has soared and has made remarkable progress in terms of technology and industries. That is why the policy should include China, alongside Japan and South Korea," he said.

In an interview with *Asahi Shimbun* recently, Anwar said that Malaysia, which had long looked to Japan and South Korea as models of economic development, was now also interested in learning from China.

The Look East Policy that then prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir

Mohamad introduced in 1982 was to learn economic modernisation strategies primarily from Japan and South Korea.

On visa-free policy for tourists from China, Anwar said: "Concerns that this move will have an effect on security will be addressed. Those who have records will be prevented from entering the country. If there are visitors with security issues, we will deport them.

"While security remains a priority, we must look at how we utilise the economic potentials that tourism brings to increase revenue and provide economic benefits to the people."

Starting Dec 1, Malaysia allows for 30-day visa-free entry to citizens of China and India.