

# Anwar firmly on right track

**KUALA LUMPUR:** In his first year as Malaysia's 10th prime minister, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has showcased an impressive pace in diplomatic engagement, reflecting his commitment to restoring the country's reputation for international advocacy and engaging in proactive regional diplomacy.

Since assuming office on Nov 24, 2022, the 76-year-old premier's proactive approach to global issues and regional affairs has garnered praise from many quarters.

Anwar's dedication is evident in his tour covering countries such as Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Turkiye, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, China, the United States (US), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt.

This is a clear demonstration of his commitment to regaining

## > Geostrategist highlights first year diplomatic achievements of prime minister, attributes success to 'approachable and pragmatic' nature

Malaysia's international stature, notably reflected in his decision to strengthen bilateral ties with Southeast Asian neighbours through his first official foreign visit to the Indonesian capital of Jakarta from Jan 8 to Jan 9.

Geostrategist Prof Dr Azmi Hassan said: "In terms of diplomatic engagement, I would say he is very approachable, pragmatic and diplomatic. He has been doing very well at the international and regional stage."

Azmi highlighted Anwar's many

diplomatic initiatives in a short span, including upholding Asean centrality, addressing the Myanmar crisis, southern Thailand conflict and delicately handling the South China Sea issue.

He said Anwar evidently wants to continue to pursue robust relations with both China and the US without being pushed to choose one side or the other, adding that engaging both major powers provides Malaysia with more strategic space to advance its national interests.

Anwar was also often complimented for his emphasis on intraregional and institutional opportunities in trade and investment in the face of US-China rivalry, Bernama reported.

"On whether Malaysia is with the Americans or the Chinese, I believe our policy is positioned in the middle, or if I may say, it is very neutral. We are neither with the US nor with China, but we maintain a friendly stance with both sides because it benefits us," said Azmi.

Anwar has been vocal in supporting the Palestinian cause from the start, condemning Israel's attacks at international platforms such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Week Informal Dialogue and Working Lunch.

In addition, Anwar's warm ties with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have received praise, particularly over his visit to Turkiye to show support for earthquake victims in February.

Another significant milestone on Anwar's diplomatic tour was his four-day official visit to China in April, during which he met Chinese leaders, including President Xi Jinping.

Malaysia secured RM170 billion worth of investment commitments from China through 19 memoranda of understanding signed between businesses in both countries, especially in green technology and the digital economy sectors.

In addition to Anwar's outbound diplomatic efforts, Malaysia hosted notable leaders from key countries during his first year in office, including German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, apart from several high-level visits by leaders from Australia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, UAE, Indonesia, India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Timor Leste, Brunei, New Zealand, Thailand, the Netherlands and Japan. The latest highlight was the inaugural state visit of Prince Albert II of Monaco from Nov 26 to 29.

Anwar is expected to end his 2023 diplomatic tour by attending the Asean-Japan Commemorative Summit from Dec 16 to 18.



**SPORTING GESTURE...** Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri joins participants of a Fun Walk held in conjunction with International Day of Persons with Disabilities at Padang Merdeka in Kuching yesterday. - **BERNAMAPIC**