

Look East Policy now includes China, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia, which has long looked to Japan and South Korea as models for economic development, is now interested in learning from China, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"We need to be open to revising any policy that has been in place for 40 years," he told the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper in an interview in Tokyo on Dec 17.

He was referring to the Look East Policy that former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad introduced in 1982 to learn economic modernisation strategies primarily from Japan and South Korea.

"I wouldn't say 'East' (in this policy) means Japan and South Korea minus China. Now, when we say 'Look East,' it's East (including China)", he was quoted as saying.

He said because digital technologies, cybersecurity and other issues are changing the world, Malaysia needs to expand on the decades-old policy while continuing its aspects that remain beneficial.

Anwar is on a five-day working visit to Tokyo from Dec 15 to attend a summit celebrating the 50th anniversary of the friendship and cooperation between Japan and Asean.

He added that Malaysia advocates a "fiercely independent" foreign policy and the country would deal with China depending on Malaysia's interests.

Anwar said when he visited the United States (during the Apec 2023 recently), he was asked why Malaysia is tilting towards China.

"Because they're investing more," he replied.

He added that Malaysia would firmly negotiate with China over territorial disputes in the South China Sea and not allow any unilateral action by Beijing.

Anwar described Japan as a "very important strategic partner", adding that Malaysia's relationship with Japan should be expanded under the Look East policy, such as sharing Japanese work ethics and technologies. - Bernama