

'ANWAR'S ROLE IN BUILDING BRIDGES

Election of a Muslim leader committed to democratic processes, principles is a big advancement



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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's priority is to address the rising cost of living and the effects of the expected global economic slowdown.

In addition, the country's chasm between progressive and conservative groups must be addressed by him.

Anwar's leadership in global Muslim affairs in particular should not be taken for granted given his international recognition and close ties to world leaders.

Leaders from Muslim nations - such as Brunei, Indonesia, Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Qatar have expressed their high regard for Anwar.

Their correspondence and visits after Anwar was named prime minister make this clear.

This may suggest that Malaysia

and other nations are forming a stronger alliance. The nation's new leadership may have an effect on the Muslim world.

Even though the majority of Muslim countries are plagued by authoritarian governments, corrupt ruling elite and weak civic movements, the election of a Muslim leader who is committed to democratic processes and principles is a significant advancement.

Anwar's biggest challenge will be to uphold moral commitment to manage Malaysia's relations with other countries while safeguarding the country's interests.

With the right approaches, the opposing forces might actually work in harmony.

How Anwar responds to the Uighur issue in China is one of those tasks.

Maintaining positive relations with China is essential throughout the economic recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic because it is Malaysia's largest trading partner and largest foreign investor.

The real challenge is in striking a balance in bilateral relationship with China while remaining tough about the plight of the Uighurs.

In another area, following the pandemic, the Middle East and North Africa region is undergoing economic recovery, particularly with rising oil and gas prices.

The region has witnessed a breakthrough in the normalisation of relations between Israel and several Arab countries.

This will have an impact on the existence of the Palestinian state and the fate of its citizens.

Malaysia should take a stand against this trend, especially now, with a prime minister who advocates for the Palestinian people's right to peace and dignity.

Meanwhile, Syrians are facing increasing suffering and hardships as a result of a decade of war.

Political turmoil in Iraq is es-

calating, with parties ready to use force once more.

Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country and the site of one of the world's worst man-made humanitarian disasters in decades, is witnessing the end of a United Nations-mediated truce, after warring parties rejected a proposal presented by a UN special envoy to extend and expand the agreement.

In this regard, Anwar, who has close ties with leaders in Turkiye, Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries, could assist these regions obtain a peaceful resolution.

On the fate of the Rohingya, Anwar, as a Muslim leader, might have to address the issues the minority group is facing.

The Rohingya in Myanmar remain marginalised, without a legal identity and are considered stateless, while those who fled their country struggle as refugees due to their inability to find employment and provide for their children's education.

It is time for Malaysia to develop a new refugee policy, including taking the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees into account.

Another issue that Anwar may need to address is Islamophobia.

Due to insulting remarks made by certain countries, including India's ruling party officials, about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, there is increasing friction between India and Muslim nations.

Nations including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Indonesia and the Maldives have protested to the Modi administration since June on the issue.

Anwar might have a role to play in the reconciliation between these countries given his image as a globalist who has strong ties with prominent Muslim countries as well as the Indian government.

Aside from political and security concerns, discovering strategic leadership roles and influences to cater to the challenges faced by Muslim global societies is critical for Anwar to ensure Malaysia can face the global economic downturn and adverse effects of climate change through partnership, expertise and resource exchanges between Muslim countries.

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's leadership in global Muslim affairs is well regarded. BERNAMA PIC