

# Anwar ticks all the boxes in the Philippines

**D**ETERMINING whether a leader has the traits to become great is not always straightforward.

Just like it's not easy to tell whether an official visit was a success.

But, in terms of stature, personality and charm, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, ticks all the boxes and more. In his latest official visit, this time to the Philippines, he effortlessly navigated the two days of public and private programmes.

Long lines of academics and students asked Anwar questions after his public lecture at the University of the Philippines on the topic of Asean. At Rumah Malaysia, a few Malaysians posed questions to the prime minister on his vision and mission.

And, in his own style, Anwar tells it like it is on how and why things should be.

It helps, too, that he knows the



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host — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr — well. The reception at the president's residence of Malacanang Palace and the easy conversation between the two indicates that relations between the two countries are on a good footing.

It helps that Anwar is a student of the Philippines, having studied and admired legendary Filipino Dr Jose Rizal, as well as cultivating networks and linkages with local education institutions and civil society to boot.

We know the trials and tribulations of Marcos, having to answer for the legacy of his father and the sentiments for or against his mother Imelda. Anwar, too, had a tumultuous journey to the top with Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and family.

But then, talking about the Asean countries Anwar visited before this, who among the four leaders has not "seen it all"?

Indonesia President Joko Widodo, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei and Thailand Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha had to overcome all kinds of challenges on the way to the top, and continue to face them.

Perhaps, that's the beauty of this group of leaders, Anwar included. They have their hands on the wheel and know how to navigate effectively.

In the Philippine capital, Anwar and Marcos know each oth-

er's history and, like the other leaders, understand more than others what it takes to succeed in these times.

The Philippines under Marcos is resetting itself for the better. The same can be said for Anwar in his quest to better Malaysia under the Madani agenda. Both leaders know that they need each other to succeed, and both countries need to do better in all areas of mutual concern.

The indications are positive that Marcos and Anwar's shared commitment would find common ground to boost ties, trade, security and defence, food security, tourism, halal industry and business revitalisation.

It is only fitting to view the words of Marcos to Anwar at Malacanang Palace as another signal of continuing good neighbourly relations in the near future and beyond.

"Mr Prime Minister, the Philip-

pinos and the Filipinos were there for you during some of your darkest days. Let me assure you now that this sincere and tested friendship has remained strong throughout the decades.

"I view the prime minister's visit as a rekindling of an old friendship and old bond that took millennia to make, between neighbours and Asean founding members, whose people have interacted and traded for centuries before they even knew the concept of countries.

"I further express my hope that this warm kinship between us as leaders will set the tone of the bilateral relations between our governments, countries, and peoples, in the years to come."

Warm words from a friend to another, indicating that Anwar's visit was a success. As for greatness, time will tell.

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