

# 'ASIA CAN BE STRONGER IF IT REMAINS UNITED'

## Anwar shares Malaysia Madani concept with Chinese forum attendees

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**A** STRONGER, more resilient Asia can be achieved if countries in the region remain united

and exchange ideas on strategy and best policy practices, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Malaysia's unity government, he said, had introduced the Malaysia Madani concept as an expression of desire to forge the country's own path based on its own mould to create a "humanistic nation" in line with civilisational values.

"In this sense, it is also our national philosophy centred on six core values: sustainability, prosperity, innovation, respect, trust and compassion.

"These core values are not new, yet they are the most germane for Malaysia given our history, particularly the past few years."

Anwar said this in his speech at the 2023 Annual Conference of the Boao Forum for Asia in Hainan, China, yesterday.

Flowing from the Madani philosophy, he also shared some thoughts on how the region could achieve solidarity and cooperation amid global challenges.

"First, we should focus on values that unite us as a human family, not those which divide us.

"Ethics, sincerity and integrity in dealings with partners in bilateral and multilateral situations must be paramount.

"The concept of democratic accountability should prevail rather than just trumpeting upon the slogan or term of 'democracy', which has been used as means of pigeonholing countries according to rather arbitrary standards," he said.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said while competition was good, there were times when cooperation was better.

"Today, geopolitical and geo-economic competition has become



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim delivering a speech at the opening ceremony of the 2023 Annual Conference of the Boao Forum for Asia in Hainan province, China, yesterday. REUTERS PIC

an inescapable feature of Asia.

"While geo-economic competition in the past was focused on commodities and resources, the current race is about cutting-edge technology as demonstrated by the competition in the semiconductor industry.

"The rivalry to be ahead in this can either take a productive or a destructive turn."

He said on one hand, it was important to recognise that countries would always seek to protect their intellectual property rights, and try to stay ahead of the competition.

However, he said it was also equally important to establish certain guardrails so that the competition would not lead to a bifurcation in the technological world, which would only raise cost and impede progress.

"Having said that, let me reiterate that unfettered competition must give way to spirited collaboration.

"We could go even further as we relate this principle of empathy to the Analects of Kung Fu-Tzu and what comes to mind are the overarching themes of being humane, conscientious and kind.

"The Prophet of Islam said, 'The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body'."

The theme of this year's Boao forum, "An Uncertain World: Solidarity and Cooperation for Development Amid Challenges", Anwar said, was most apt given the "extraordinary and flow" of

geopolitics and power, as well as the current geo-economics.

Taking an example of the collapse of the Berlin Wall, he said ensuing rapprochement signalled the end of the Cold War, but had led to grandiloquent proclamations about the end of history, namely, the assertions by the West about the triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism, being the be-all and end-all for progress.

"In the meantime, China and India undertook unprecedented socio-economic reforms that resulted in phenomenal growth, empowering them to reclaim their rightful place on the global stage.

"Asean too has grown, and now we have seen the new Africa.

"China's 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics', 'Chinese Path to Modernisation' and President Xi Jinping's idea of a community for the 'Shared Future for Mankind' are notable examples of this."

Anwar also said translating lofty ideas into practical reality, solidarity and cooperation was best exemplified in the realisation of the Belt and Road Initiative.

"With the pandemic behind us, we should try to regain its momentum.

"I cannot overstate that if we continue to cooperate, speak in a unified voice and exchange ideas on strategy and best policy practices, we can work towards an Asia that is stronger and more resilient," he added.