

Anwar: It's about geography

'China is our neighbour and a vital trading partner, so is the US'



Working towards global peace: Anwar taking a group photo after delivering his special lecture entitled 'Super Power Rivalry and Rising Tensions in the Asia Pacific' to students at the University of California, Berkeley in San Francisco, US. — Bernama

SAN FRANCISCO: Malaysia is not tilting towards China but geographically, that country is closer and is a reliable friend and ally, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister stressed that the United States is equally important and is a traditional ally, as well as a major investor that has helped boost Malaysia's economy.

"Cumulatively, the United States stands as number one in terms of our total investments, but increasingly, China has become one of the major investors," he said during a dialogue at the University of California, Berkeley here on Nov 14.

"China is our neighbour, an important country that has matured in terms of its economic vibrancy, and we would benefit immensely as we continue to engage with it," said Anwar according to Bernama.

"So, I think my point is this, that whilst we have to listen to big powers, they also have to engage and listen to the views and expression of our country. We, as a developing and emerging economy, need to engage and decide what is best for our country."

The session was held on the sidelines of the 30th Apec Economic Leaders' Meeting that is taking place here from Nov 14-17.

He had earlier delivered a special lecture titled "Super Power Rivalry and Rising Tensions in the Asia Pacific".

The question-and-answer session was moderated by Berkeley Apec Study Center director Prof Vinod Aggarwal.

Anwar added that Malaysia wants a multilateral regional approach in dealing with disputes over the South China Sea.

"Our position is to make sure it

remains a regional problem. The solution, of course, is aggressive diplomatic engagement which we are continuing, even within Asean, but (also) together, Asean and China."

On a related subject, Anwar said the world was keenly awaiting the outcome of a bilateral meeting between US President Joe Biden and China's President Xi Jinping.

"The engagement (could result in some) resolutions. Not necessarily the contentious problems of Gaza, Palestine or Ukraine, Russia, but at least trade investments and understanding on these related issues that would help instil more confidence into the world economy," he said.

He added that warmer ties between the two would benefit Asean countries, including Malaysia.

On a topic closer to home,

Anwar defended Malaysia's continued affirmative action policies as necessary for the poor and marginalised to get equal opportunities.

"There are some schools in Malaysia, the urban schools, that have the best facilities, competing with some remote schools in the heartlands, rural heartland.

"Hence, there needs to be some form of additional assistance. You can call it affirmative action or you can call it additional support. But you cannot have pure meritocracy without providing basic, fair opportunities," he said.

The Prime Minister added that affirmative action policies need not be race-based.

"You can be a Malay, Chinese or Indian, but if you're poor, we deal with you as the issue of poverty is not race-based, but a needs-based issue."