

LEADING THE 'SHAHADA'

ANWAR LEADS CONVERSION OF N.Y. MAN

Event after Friday prayers was not part of PM's agenda

NEW YORK

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim had the opportunity to lead the *shahada* (Islamic declaration of faith) for a man who wanted to embrace Islam at the Islamic Cultural Centre of New York (ICCNY) on Friday.

As Anwar mingled with congregants after presenting a donation of the Quran from the government to the mosque, the emcee announced that a man, identified as Andrew Vinals, wanted to convert to Islam and requested Anwar to come forward.

Subsequently, a mosque offi-



**AHMAD ZAINI
KAMARUZZAMAN**

cial was seen inviting Anwar as the emcee announced that the prime minister would oversee the conversion of the man.

A media officer from the Prime Minister's Office said the event wasn't planned and was not part of the official agenda.

Anwar was the first foreign head of state to be granted the honour of delivering a sermon at the historic ICCNY, which was the first mosque opened here on Sept 25, 1991.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim looking on as Andrew Vinals (in white shirt) hugs a man after his conversion to Islam at the Islamic Cultural Centre of New York on Friday. BERNAMA PIC

The city here also hosts the headquarters of the United Nations, where Anwar is attending the 78th session of its General Assembly.

After prayers, the emcee expressed gratitude to Anwar for accepting the mosque's invitation to pray and deliver the sermon.

He noted that the mosque's congregants were fortunate to have Anwar, who was held in high regard internationally, especially in the Muslim world, to join them

in congregational prayers.

During his sermon, Anwar urged Muslims to remain united in face of challenges, including threats to the religion posed by Islamophobia.

"We are advised by Allah through the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad to engage in missionary work to provide an understanding to non-Muslims.

"In addition to promoting Islamic unity, we also need to foster relationships with non-Muslims

so that we can help them better understand Islam," he said.

He called on Muslims not only to deepen their religious knowledge but also to acquire a wide range of knowledge and skills in technology fields.

He also explained the concept of Malaysia Madani to the congregants, which he established after becoming prime minister, which was based on the Islamic state of Madinah led by Prophet Muhammad.