

# State of the world

## Anwar wants a drastic reboot

**T**HE world faces some serious problems and as usual it falls on Malaysia to bluntly point them out to the United Nations (UN) for resolution. To Malaysia, coming as it does from the often ignored South, speaking out at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) has become an annual affair. Not because Malaysia loves to project its voice, but because the problems remain unresolved. This time it was the turn of 10th Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's to scold the world body into action. His criticisms were blunt. Let's start with the UN. Pointing to the state of the world, he said they "cry out for drastic, systemic reform, a total reset of the global institutions that impact our lives". Anwar did not mention the UN by name, but we hope he meant it to be included in the "total reset". Or at least our hope is that the world leaders understood it to be so. There is no dispute about global institutions needing a reboot, but nothing will change if it doesn't start at the source: the UN.

The founding nations may have intended the UNGA to be the central forum for deliberation, policymaking and representation within the UN,

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to use some of Anwar's words. But the reality is that the veto-wielding five permanent members in the Security Council make sure that UNGA remains lame. So we get a world where a few bully the rest into submission. And so it has been for 78 years of the world body's existence. Malaysia wants this checked. Because, if unchecked, "this will ultimately lead once

again to a world where the masses are unrepresented, where the few rule over the many, and the many resent the few".

Most of the problems, if not all, highlighted by Anwar to the UNGA, stem from what he terms "binary choice". The Palestine issue has remained unresolved for 78 years, if not more, because of this. Blame it on the politics of dispossession sponsored by the big powers. Prejudice, especially if it comes from big powers, is a great danger to the world. If this is not enough, a new form of prejudice — new form of racism to Anwar — is on the rise around the world: negative profiling and stereotyping of Muslims. The result: a spike in hatred, intolerance and acts of violence against Muslims and their religious sanctities. Lately, Quran burning has joined the list. "We are appalled at the legitimisation of these acts under the feeble defence of human rights," Anwar told the assembled leaders. The prime minister didn't ask what happened to acceptance, tolerance and mutual respect, but we do. If the UN wants to be the go-to organisation, it must get the nations of the world to unite against such prejudice. Might must never be right, because it isn't. A might-is-right world is a binary world that preaches a "you-are-with-us" or "you-are-against-us" belief. This world is blind to diversity when the reality is that the human world is one of many, not one. The community of nations must learn to be united in all its diversity. It is only in this way that we can ensure that, God willing, all our tomorrows will be better than all our yesterdays. Otherwise, Anwar will be at UNGA 79, pouring out the wrath of the South. Again.