

How Anwar can make an Asean-BRICS partnership work

WHEN Malaysia chairs Asean next year, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will have the chance to foster stronger ties between Asean and the BRICS's main members — Brazil, Russia, India and China.

It will allow him to present a transformative vision for the geopolitical and economic landscape of Southeast Asia. His leadership comes at a crucial time.

Anwar's emphasis on reinforcing Asean's unity and expanding its influence through collaborations with BRICS nations has the potential to invigorate the regional organisation with renewed purpose and direction.

Individually and collectively, BRICS members are significant economic and political players on the global stage.

Under a cooperative framework, Brazil, Russia, India and China have effectively harnessed their collective power in global economic governance.

Thus, the potential for stronger trade ties, enhanced investment opportunities and strategic partnerships is substantial.

Nevertheless, the diverse political interests within Asean and BRICS and the economic disparities between Asean member



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states present significant hurdles.

Anwar's approach will likely prioritise proactive diplomacy to bolster Asean's global influence.

By aligning Asean's economic and political strategies with those of BRICS, Anwar aims to build a more robust and cohesive Asean that can better withstand external pressures and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

China and India are among the world's fastest-growing economies and their trade relationships with Asean have seen significant growth.

By strengthening these ties, Asean stands to gain economically, which would in turn promote greater diversification and resilience.

For Malaysia, this cooperation has the potential to position it as a central player in regional and global economic networks, at-

tracting investment and fostering economic growth.

Asean has traditionally maintained a neutral position in global politics, managing its relationships with major powers. But by forging closer ties with BRICS nations, this balance could shift, potentially leading to tensions.

Additionally, the diverse political systems and strategic interests of BRICS countries could pose challenges to Asean's cohesion, as member states may hold divergent views on how to engage with these nations. Careful and strategic leadership is needed.

It will require addressing the potential economic disparities within Asean, ensuring that all member states benefit equitably from increased cooperation with BRICS by implementing policies that foster inclusive growth and development, guaranteeing that the economic benefits are shared.

One crucial aspect of Anwar's leadership will be the cultivation of mutual understanding and trust between Asean and BRICS members beyond economic and political agreements and this requires cultural and diplomatic exchanges.

Asean must also prepare for potential shifts in geopolitics. Increased cooperation with BRICS

could introduce new challenges.

Anwar's leadership will be vital in developing strategies that enable Asean to effectively navigate these shifts while maintaining its independence, neutrality and maximising the benefits derived from its partnerships.

Anwar's leadership is expected to be characterised by proactive diplomacy and engagement, prioritising initiatives that foster stronger ties between Asean and BRICS, leveraging Malaysia's position to enhance Asean's influence in global affairs.

This includes addressing global challenges, such as climate change, economic inequality and security issues, through collaborative efforts with BRICS nations.

Economically, Anwar's leadership is expected to promote sustainable development and resilience within Asean.

By deepening ties with BRICS, Asean can diversify its economic relationships, reducing its reliance on traditional partners and enhancing its ability to withstand global economic fluctuations.

This is particularly important for Malaysia, which stands to benefit significantly from increased investment and trade with BRICS nations. To ensure the success,

some recommendations must be considered.

First, it is essential to prioritise inclusive growth and development within Asean. The economic benefits of cooperation must be distributed equitably so that all member states can share in the gains.

The capacity for decision-making must be improved to manage these complex relationships to ensure Asean's collective voice remains strong and unified in its engagements with BRICS.

Better cultural and diplomatic exchanges can build stronger, more resilient ties.

This enhances the effectiveness of economic and political agreements and reduces the risk of conflicts arising from misunderstandings or differences in political systems and values.

Anwar's leadership will be crucial in guiding Asean through these challenges, ensuring the organisation remains independent, neutral and focused on promoting regional stability and prosperity.

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