

# 'Asean to take centrality stance'

PM: We will engage more actively with US, China to reduce their growing tensions

**PETALING JAYA:** Despite rising tensions between the United States and China, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) will uphold its "centrality" stance when dealing with the two global powers.

In an interview with the Indian news portal India Today Global, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim emphasised that, as Malaysia assumes the chairmanship next year, the country will

lead Asean in engaging more actively with the United States and China to reduce the growing tensions between them.

"We face the problem with the US and China, the increasing tensions. But as long as we take this centrality role and continue to engage with both sides, I believe it will be all right to contain."

Anwar stressed that Malaysia will not be pressured to take sides in the geopolitical conflict

between other countries.

"Why force us to take sides? We know that in this globalised world, we must interact with everyone.

"The US remains an important country in trade, investment, education, technology and AI, while China is emerging as a major regional power.

"Additionally, I have placed considerable importance on India, contrary to my precedes-

sors," he added.

However, Anwar made it clear that Malaysia will not remain silent on critical global issues.

"We will not shy away from addressing gross injustices, hypocrisy or contradictions. We understand our limits, but we must balance this with protecting the bilateral interests of the common people," he said.

Regarding the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, Anwar noted

Malaysia's direct impact, with the country hosting more than 200,000 Rohingya refugees fleeing violence.

"I believe strongly in human rights and freedom, and therefore we must protect them. However, this situation is causing significant hardship for us, so engagement must continue," he said.

The Prime Minister was in India for an official visit from Aug 19 to Aug 21.