

M'sia to ensure Asean leads integration with partners

NEW DELHI: Malaysia, which will assume the chairmanship of Asean next year, will work closely with India and other dialogue partners to ensure that the 10-nation bloc remains at the forefront of regional integration and continues to be a driving force for sustainable development in the region.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said he expected India, being one of Asean's long-standing dialogue partners, to play a pivotal role as the Asean-India partnership has been instrumental in fostering economic growth, security cooperation, and cultural exchange across the region.

"We see great potential in deepening this collaboration, particularly as we seek to align Asean's

priorities with broader initiatives that support the Global South," he said during his lecture entitled "Towards a Rising Global South: Leveraging Malaysia-India Ties" at Sapru House, Indian Council of World Affairs here, on Tuesday, Bernama reported.

He added that Malaysia would not only focus on strengthening existing Asean mechanisms and institutions and making them fit for purpose but also find synergies with other frameworks that are crucial for regional development and prosperity.

Malaysia also has plans to enhance engagement between Asean and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, which should not only link the

regions but also highlight overlooked challenges and priorities, he said.

"These challenges, rooted in the unique geography, demographics and resources of our regions, are silent yet potent forces that must be acknowledged and addressed," Anwar added.

In pursuing these goals, he emphasised that the Global South agenda must be deeply anchored in shared norms and values to reflect the extraordinary diversity that characterises these regions.

Besides India, Asean's other dialogue partners are Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

On a separate matter, Anwar once again criticised the international community for inaction over the Gaza genocide, calling it sheer hypocrisy.

He said there needs to be a clear message to put an end to the hypocrisy.

"Some may talk about a genocide in Ukraine because of the bombing of some villages, but when 40,000 people are killed in Palestine, they treat it as an 'impact of war' and condone it.

"This is shocking and I call it sheer hypocrisy," he said during a

question-and-answer session after the lecture.

Earlier, the Prime Minister took to social media platform X to underscore that any meaningful progress towards peace must begin with the unconditional cessation of all military actions and acts of aggression against the Palestinian people by the Israelis.

During the working visit, Anwar also attended an engagement session with the Malaysian diaspora at the Malaysian High Commission.

In his speech at the event, he highlighted the necessity for Malaysia to make some unpopular decisions, such as the rationalisation of diesel subsidies, to prevent the country's wealth from being exploited by outsiders.