

'DETAILED STUDY DONE ON JOINING BRICS'

Differences of views should not hinder our participation in bloc, PM tells House

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THE government has conducted a detailed study on all implications of Malaysia joining the intergovernmental organisation BRICS, said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

During the prime minister's question time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday, Anwar said while Malaysia had different views on certain issues compared with other BRICS members, they should not hinder the country's participation in the organisation.

"The government took a bit of time to study the possibilities and implications (of Malaysia joining BRICS). And when we see other Asian countries that are also in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development participating in BRICS, there is no reason why Malaysia should be excluded from such a consideration.

"The same goes for our relationship with other countries, including Western nations, where we do not agree on everything. There are disagreements, such as our differences of opinion regarding Gaza, but this does not mean we should cut off our relationships.

"Similarly, China and Russia have different systems, but they are both close to us. The United Arab Emirates and India, too, have economic trade agreements with the United States and European countries that are not part of BRICS," he said.

Anwar said this in response to a supplementary question from Datuk Seri Doris Sophia Bardi, who asked whether the government had conducted a thorough study of Malaysia's participation in BRICS.

BRICS is an acronym that stands for founding members Brazil, Russia, India and China, as well as South Africa.

Anwar also said Malaysia's ap-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim answering questions in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

plication to join the bloc might take some time, but a good relationship had been established between Malaysia and BRICS countries.

"However, there is a possibility of becoming a partner country in an immediate context or adopting a BRICS partner country model before finalising our participation."

Anwar said the decision to join the organisation did not contradict Malaysia's foreign policy as the country had continuously taken the approach of being free and independent in establishing relationships with all parties.

This, he said, was also among the reasons the government retained membership in Apec and maintained the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which was signed by the previous administration.

"At the same time, the current economic reality is no longer unipolar, where the economic prowess (of a country) does not only depend on the strength of a big nation like the US, but also on new emerging powers such as China and India.

"Secondly, we also feel that Global South countries should have a stance that can aid our negotiations in the World Trade Organisation or even the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Malaysia should be included in the network on these issues.

"Why should we be tied to one bloc? There is a new bloc that offers competition now and we will continue to establish relationships with both blocs."

In terms of trade and gross do-

mestic product growth, Anwar added that the GDP of BRICS member countries comprised 26.2 per cent of the global total.

"The GDP of BRICS members stood at about US\$26 trillion (in 2022), which is 26.2 per cent of the world's GDP.

"Therefore, by opening the channel (through joining BRICS), we are confident that it will benefit the national economy and also Malaysian companies."

Last month, Anwar announced that Malaysia will soon begin the process of joining BRICS, which comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the UAE.

Anwar also said he had spoken to Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva about Malaysia's intention to join the bloc.

The organisation, then known as BRIC, held its first summit in Russia in 2009 with the participation of other founding members Brazil, India and China to highlight investment opportunities in the countries.

The group has undergone two phases of expansion. In 2011, South Africa was formally accepted as a member and the group was renamed BRICS.

In August last year, the group extended invitations to six potential countries, including Argentina, which however reversed its decision in late December of the same year.

In January this year, four new members — Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the UAE — were formally admitted into the group, taking the total membership to nine countries.

BRICS countries are considered the foremost geopolitical rival of the Group of Seven bloc.