

# 'M'sia to lead with *Madani* principles as Asean Chair'

> In upholding nation's principles of non-alignment and cooperation, ideals show it is possible to act respectfully while being active player in shaping region, says Anwar

**KUALA LUMPUR:** As Malaysia prepares to assume the Asean chairmanship in 2025, the country will strive to lead with moral character, as emphasised in the principles of *Malaysia Madani*, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said this entails a civil and inclusive approach that celebrates interconnectivity.

Anwar said in upholding Malaysia's enduring principles of non-alignment and cooperation, the *Madani* ideals demonstrate that it is possible to act respectfully while being an active player in shaping the Southeast Asian region.

"Indeed for Malaysia, Asean, more than a pillar of our foreign policy, is also a force multiplier, and a valuable asset to exercise our agency," he said in his keynote address at the 37th Asia-Pacific Roundtable yesterday.

Anwar also stressed the importance for the regional bloc to start addressing the underutilisation of its mechanisms, namely the Asean Regional Forum, the Asean Plus meetings and the East Asia Summit.

He said it should also be anchored on

the fact that Asean's future development evolves alongside its member states, their national interests and what the group can collectively achieve together.

"In these times of great uncertainty, it is imperative to redouble our efforts towards further strengthening Asean to be the key platform in managing regional affairs."

He added that the regional bloc needs to move from mere rhetoric to concrete action, and focus on seeking ways to deliver on its aspirations.

On the crisis in Myanmar, Anwar said Malaysia would work with other Asean member states and dialogue partners who have influence on Myanmar, to push for peace, more effective humanitarian mechanisms and the eventual political engagement of all relevant stakeholders in that country.

"Of course, Asean can only facilitate any effort when the various parties in Myanmar are ready to do so. However, this does not mean that we should not try multipronged, more creative tracks. The status quo is not static."

He said there are the nascent beginnings of long and difficult

conversations of what the future of Myanmar would look like, including the possibility of a federation-like system.

"While it is not our place to decide on what is best for the people of Myanmar, it is incumbent on us, friends and neighbours to help facilitate what and where we can."

Anwar said Malaysia consistently called for an end to the ongoing violence and the history of political marginalisation of the people of Myanmar as well as adherence to the Five-Point Consensus that was jointly reached in Jakarta in April 2021.

On foreign policy, he said Malaysia is fiercely independent, stressing that the country refuses to be defined by how major powers see the world and will continue to strive for its national and strategic interests, defined on its own terms, Bernama reported.

"In this vein, Malaysia maintains a strong and fruitful relationship with both China and the United States.

"At the same time, Malaysia will continue to pursue productive and meaningful relations with our other partners, whether they be our longstanding and comprehensive strategic partners, or friends in the Global South.."

Anwar said Malaysia has a proud history of being part of the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War, adding that by remaining faithful to the principle of non-alignment, the country has proven that the pursuit of dynamic neutrality is not only feasible but highly desirable.