

Govt to enhance nation's world competitiveness: PM

> 'Measures to be taken include boosting country's economic management, strengthening ringgit and implementing targeted subsidies'

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is looking at and taking the appropriate action to raise Malaysia's position in the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking (WCR), which currently stands at number 34, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said this includes enhancing the country's economic management, strengthening the ringgit and implementing targeted subsidies, which are expected to boost the ranking.

"There are certainly weaknesses that must be addressed. I just want to point out that generally, the report maintains our position as a stable economy. Based on the International Institute or Management Development report, Malaysia is in eighth spot for the economic performance sub-factor, so it is still not concerning.

"I do not deny the ringgit's performance previously as well as our higher expenditure for subsidies and being late in subsidy nationalisation, but I believe that if we resolutely take the (appropriate) measures, our ranking will jump," he said during the Ministers'

Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He was replying to a supplementary question from Afnan Hamimi Taib Azamuddin (PN-Alor Setar), who wanted to know the government's strategy following the decline in WCR ranking.

On Afnan Hamimi's remark that the decline is seen as a reflection of the Cabinet's performance, Anwar said the performance is a shared responsibility of all.

"If there is criticism that we are being neglectful, we will strive to improve, and this is the responsibility for everyone, not just the Cabinet members, secretaries-general, directors-general and government agencies.

"I concur that everyone, including me and those under the ministers, should do our best to improve performance, and I will convey it to the Cabinet."

Meanwhile, Anwar reiterated Malaysia's stance to continue defending the rights of the Palestinian people.

He said the government's stance has also been expressed at the global level through international conferences and during his

meetings with key world leaders.

"The government stands firm in defending the rights of the people in Gaza, even during international summits, during meetings with (US) President Joe Biden, (German Chancellor) Olaf Scholz, (Australian Prime Minister) Anthony Albanese, and most recently China's Premier Li Qiang.

"At every meeting (with world leaders) the issue was raised as our main agenda.

"We are the only country that openly meets with the leaders of Hamas, although we received pressure, we have to do this and defend the position of Hamas as we fought for Nelson Mandela (former president of South Africa) and others."

Anwar said this in reply to Datuk Mohd Shahar Abdullah (BN-Paya Besar), who sought clarification on the decision made by a consortium of government-linked investment companies on the sale of Malaysia Airport Holdings Berhad shares to Global Infrastructure Partners.

He said the Madani government under his leadership has also taken the strongest stance in the history of the Malaysian government against Israeli-owned companies, Bernama reported.

"Israeli companies continued to operate (in Malaysia) until last year. Only the *Madani* government decided to stop all direct trade, including with ZIM (shipping company based in Israel)."



CORDIAL MEETING ... Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim chatting with US Ambassador to Malaysia Edgard D. Kagan at the American Malaysian chamber Of Commerce 47th AGM luncheon at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. - *BERNAMAPIC*