'WORK TOGETHER AS ONE*

MALAYSIA BACKS SINGLE ASEAN MARKET

Target can be achieved through strong cooperation via caucus, says Anwar

KAMARULZAIDI KAMIS

LIMA

MALAYSIA, as the chair of the Asean Business Advisory Council (Asean-BAC) next year, will continue to focus on centralising Asean as a single market, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the target could be achieved through strong cooperation, particularly between the government and business sectors, which can be facilitated through the Asean Caucus.

He emphasised the importance of the Asean Caucus playing an active role in the Apec Business Advisory Council (ABAC) to support Asean's commitment to achieving sustainable economic growth and addressing wealth disparities.

Anwar also expressed his sincere appreciation to ABAC for its steadfast commitment to promoting Asean-focused initiatives through the ABAC-Asean Caucus.

He said the strategic platform introduced by ABAC Indonesia in November last year, during the Apec Economic Leaders' Week in San Francisco, reflected ABAC'S dedication to strengthening regional cooperation, fostering economic unity and driving shared prosperity among Asean economies.

"Although we may hold different leadership roles at different times, we work together as one. It doesn't matter whether Indonesia or Malaysia is chairing. This arrangement is unique and it is our collective responsibility to ensure its effectiveness," he said during the Apec Economic Leaders' Dialogue with ABAC here yesterday.

The dialogue was attended by Indonesia's president Prabowo Subianto, Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz, ABAC Malaysia chairman Datuk Ruben Emir Gnanalingam as moderator and ABAC Indonesia chairman Anindya Novyan Bakrie.

Anwar and Prabowo called for increased cooperation between the business sectors of both countries, highlighting the importance of collaboration in driving regional economic prosperity.

Speaking before the business community, ministers and other Asean partners, Anwar emphasised the significance of Asean as a region that was not only peaceful but also rapidly growing, offering great opportunities for member countries to leverage strengths in digital technology, food security and energy transition.

"Asean is a unique region, with an unmatched tradition of friendship and cooperation. We are in the most peaceful sub-region of the world and this gives us great opportunities to work together, especially in the digital and energy sectors.".

Prabowo said political peace and stability were the basis for economic prosperity. He called for major countries to turn geopolitical competition into an opportunity for peaceful cooperation.

The president said he was determined to overcome the economic imbalance in his country by focusing on the empowerment of the poor and improving the government's efficiency in dealing with corruption.

"Indonesia has tremendous potential, but we must face certain challenges. We cannot let one per cent of the elite enjoy all the fruits of prosperity, while the common people live in poverty," he said.

During the meeting, the two leaders exchanged views on how to boost mutual prosperity through closer cooperation between the public and private sectors.