

# M'sia to engage with East Asian nations

**SEOUL:** It is essential for Malaysia to engage with East Asian countries, particularly South Korea, Japan and China, as they hold significant economic and strategic importance to the country, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said he believes that by fostering friendship and trust, Malaysia will be able to address more complex issues in the fields of education, research, public health, digitalisation, artificial intelligence (AI), military collaboration and maritime matters.

As an important trading nation, Malaysia has become a regional hub for global companies, including data centres and semiconductor hubs, demonstrating the country's potential for further growth, he said.

In his special address titled "Strategic Partners in a Complex World: Malaysia, Korea, and the Future of Asia" at the Seoul National University, Anwar also stressed the importance of cooperation within Asean, describing it as one of the most peaceful and dynamic economic regions in the world.



**Business potential:** Anwar and the Malaysian delegation (right) having a meeting with Samsung executives in Seoul. — Bernama

"The collaboration and the working relationships among Asean leaders are excellent. I mean, I can just call any leader at anytime and they will treat us like real friends, trusted friends.

"What is lacking is intra-Asean trade, investment, as well as more vibrant economic activities," he said.

Therefore, when Malaysia takes

over the Asean Chairmanship next year, Anwar plans to prioritise initiatives such as the Asean energy grid, intra-regional trade and investment, aiming to strengthen the region's economic ties while working with East Asian partners like China, Japan and South Korea.

Asked how Malaysia as Asean Chair can address economic chal-

lenges and strategies related to US President-elect Donald Trump's policies, particularly his tariffs on China, Anwar said Trump's protectionist stance has significant consequences for international trade.

Given China's status as a major economic player, he said countries with strong trade relations with the republic like South Korea, Malaysia and Asean countries would feel the effects.

"I hope for the best, which means there is a possibility of a shift (in these policies to lessen negative effects).

"We know that a policy must be formulated to protect the interests of their own countries but I believe extreme protectionism will not help national economy," he added, Bernama reported.

Despite potential disruptions, the Prime Minister said the region's economies, including those of Asean countries, are stronger and more resilient than before.

While there may be short-term slowdowns, economies should be able to navigate through challenges, he added.