

MALAYSIA'S ASEAN CHAIRMANSHIP

PM: 2025 WILL BE HISTORIC FOR ASEAN

It will be the first time bloc is hosting a meeting involving GCC and China, Anwar tells Dewan

KUALA LUMPUR

MALAYSIA'S chairmanship of Asean in 2025 will be a significant one as it marks a historic coming together of its member states with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Plus China.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said this would mark Asean's first time hosting a conference involving its 10 member states and the GCC, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait, along with China.

"This will be a starting point for Asean when it takes place next year. We will also continue meetings with the bloc's dialogue part-

ners, including China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand, the European Union (EU) and the United States," he said during Prime Minister's Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Anwar was responding to a question from Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari (Pakatan Harapan-Gombak), who also asked if Asean had plans to ease immigration borders to boost the bloc's potential.

To this, Anwar said such measures could not be implemented at this time.

"Asean's focus is on economic growth. We don't want Asean to become a battleground for the competition of major powers.

"Will there be an immigration network like that in the EU? I don't think it will happen anytime soon, but improvements in energy grid connectivity have already been agreed upon.

"This means that two funda-

mental aspects of strengthening Asean's interconnectedness are through digital integration and energy grids."

Anwar, who is finance minister, said all states in Malaysia would be involved in Asean meetings next year.

He said this was to ensure that no state was left behind in reaping the economic benefits of Malaysia's status as the Asean chair.

"Apart from the main meetings of leaders in Kuala Lumpur, we also agreed that all other meetings involving ministers, including foreign and economic ministers, will be held in all states in Peninsular Malaysia and in Sabah and Sarawak.

"As Perlis or Kelantan do not have the capacity to host, we will try to arrange discussions at Asean officials' level or at least hold visits to these states to ensure that no state is left behind."

