

# Malaysian officials to engage US on tariff issue

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Asserting that Malaysia will protect its economic interests, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says officials will be dispatched to the United States to initiate dialogue on the tariff issue.

“While we intend to remain steadfast trade partners with the United States, we will, in tandem, do whatever it takes to safeguard our economic interests,” he said at the Asean Investment Conference (AIC) 2025, hosted by the Securities Commission Malaysia.

He said tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump’s administration are neither the first challenge to multilateralism nor will they be the last.

The Prime Minister, however, said if Asean can hold its nerve by staying open, pragmatic and cohesive, “it may yet be among the last believers in a world that works better when it works together.”

Anwar pointed out that Malaysia’s trade with the US has long been a model of mutual gain,



with exports supporting not just growth but also high-quality jobs across the latter country.

While the commercial relationship has served both countries well, the latest tariff measures may end up harming all, he said.

“Yet, we do not believe in megaphone diplomacy. As part of our soft diplomacy of quiet engagement, we will be dispatching officials to Washington to begin the dialogue process,” he added.

In the meantime, he said Malaysia would adapt as it always had.

“Winds may shift, but we do not drift. Our trade diversification strategy is already gathering pace,” he addressed the conference, a side event of the 12th Asean Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting.

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Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

He said Malaysia will proactively engage with the United States towards achieving a mutually beneficial outcome.

“At the same time, we intend to diversify and strengthen our ties with all major trade markets across the European Union, Asia, Middle East and Africa.

“These efforts are not occurring in a vacuum. They unfold against a backdrop of mounting uncertainty, one that transcends any single country’s policy choice,” he said.

Anwar noted that globalisation, once thought to be forging ahead, now appeared to be in retreat with protectionism on the rise,

supply chains being reconfigured, and multilateralism increasingly spoken of in the past tense.

He said in this environment, Asean stands out as a beacon of hope and positivity as the bloc remains broadly committed to openness, cooperation and institutional continuity.

“Our total trade in goods stands at US\$3.5 trillion (RM15.69 trillion). But this figure is not guaranteed.

“With the barrage of tariffs sweeping across the world in a fast and furious fashion, we are witnessing the fraying of the global order,” he said.

“Therefore, Asean must rely

more on itself.”

Asean, said Anwar, must move beyond rhetoric to execution, adding that while tariff liberalisation within the region is largely complete, regulatory alignment, cross-border logistics and digital connectivity remain unfinished business.

As Asean Chair this year, Malaysia will prioritise the revitalisation of strategic platforms such as the Asean Plus Three as mechanisms for economic resilience, said Anwar.

Separately, Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan said Malaysian officials are expected to head to the United States at the end of April.

“We will go to the United States to discuss in the right way to have a better understanding and to find a better outcome,” he said.

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