

'Strong Asean fosters strong friendships'

Ties with regional neighbours remain a priority, says PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Asean will ensure its relationships with its neighbours, particularly China, Japan and South Korea, remain strong and formidable, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said Asean also continues to enjoy good bilateral and trading relations with the United States.

"Our fundamentals will remain strong if we can secure peace in this region, and peace means we will be friendly to all our neighbours.

"As I've said, China is a very important player," he said during his closing remarks at the 12th Asean Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors



Chair of
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Meeting here.

The four-day meeting, which was held as part of Malaysia's chairmanship of Asean, ended yesterday.

Anwar noted that Asean's economy would also be affected by the situation faced by China as the United States has increased tariffs against the country at 125%.

Stressing that Asean is all for free trade, he said the group is guided by a rule-based economy.

"Of course, countries will have their own specific priority and action but without exception, Asean has to work together and



No place like home: Anwar visiting the Malaysian exhibition during the closing ceremony of the 12th Asean Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. — Bernama

present a more cohesive case in our engagement with the West including the United States," he added.

He said Asean has been an extremely successful example of regional collaboration.

"This has been ongoing for decades. I'm not denying the fact

that sometimes we have some minor issues, but they have not caused distrust or sown seeds of discord. So, I think we should continue to work on that," he said.

He also noted the importance of Asean championing economic development and reforms with

other neighbouring countries in the interest of mutual prosperity.

Anwar said he has been in discussions with close allies of US President Donald Trump and is also in contact with New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, who has expressed interest in collaborating with Asean.