

# Nations must be allowed to freely decide partnerships

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Sovereign interdependence must be built on the principles of choice, resilience and mutual respect so that nations remain open to the world without compromising their dignity, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said interdependence is unavoidable in today's interconnected world, but smaller and developing nations must be allowed to freely decide on partnerships, rather than ties imposed by external powers.

"This is not a call for a retreat from globalisation. Instead, we are remaking it so that nations stand more firmly on their own feet even as they stand together," he said at the Kuala Lumpur Roundtable on Asia-Pacific Regional Cooperation of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA).

Also present were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan and BFA chairman Ban Ki-Moon.

Anwar also said interdependence has been weaponised by the world's largest economy.

"Energy pipelines, shipping routes and semiconductor supply chains have become instruments of unfair leverage.

"Payment systems and capital flows are deployed as tools of pressure.

"The result is pervasive uncertainty and a sense of fragility is unmistakable. This is the new reality," he said.

Anwar said the pursuit of unbridled mercantilism, generating economic disruptions from tariffs to export restrictions, would have profound security and geopolitical implications.

"But history shows that when nations compete to build walls, prosperity declines and instability spreads. That is why we argue for sovereign interdependence," he said.

Co-hosted by BFA and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia, the roundtable is part of BFA's regional dialogue series, underscoring Malaysia's leadership as Asean Chair and its commitment to regional collaboration.