



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim meeting Bahraini Crown Prince Sheikh Salman Hamad al-Khalifa, who is also prime minister, in Manama yesterday. PIC COURTESY OF PRIME MINISTER OFFICE

SPEECH TO 400 INTELLECTUALS

TACKLE SECTARIANISM, MUSLIM SCHOLARS TOLD

Divisions weaken unity, prevent cooperation among countries that should be allies, says Anwar

MANAMA

ISLAMIC scholars and intellectuals should unite to address sectarian divisions and take decisive steps to support Palestine and Syria.

In his speech at a gathering of leading Muslim scholars here yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said sectarian divisions weakened political unity and prevented cooperation among Muslim nations.

"Sectarianism is wielded as a weapon to ignite tensions, divide communities, erode political unity and obstruct cooperation between countries that should logically unite as allies," he said.

Anwar was the only head of government speaking before an audience of around 400 scholars and intellectuals at the Intra-Islamic Dialogue Conference (IIDC) here yesterday.

The IIDC, which ends today, is held under the patronage of King Hamad Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain.

The conference was attended by Sheikh Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, Professor Dr Ahmad Muhammad Ahmad At-Tayyeb, who is also



MOHD ISKANDAR IBRAHIM

chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, as well as religious leaders from various countries.

Earlier, At-Tayyeb, in his address, said the effort to unite the ummah must begin with scholars, intellectuals and Islamic elites acting as one.

Supporting this call, Anwar said the plight of the Palestinian people was a stark example of the consequences of Islamic division, and urged Muslim nations to offer support in various forms.

"Look at Palestine. For decades, the Palestinian people have faced occupation, expulsion and systematic injustice.

"Their struggle is a clear reminder of our internal divisions. So, the Muslim world must show solidarity with the Palestinian people — not just through empty words, but through collective action, diplomacy, and economic support," he said.

Anwar stressed the economic dependence, political fragmentation and the failure to form a united front had left the Palestinian people vulnerable to ongoing violence.

"The massacres in Gaza, the expansion of illegal settlements, and the continuous expulsion of families require more than mere words of condemnation.

"We must commit to providing tangible resources to support Palestinian education, health-care and infrastructure.

"We must tirelessly champion the Palestinian cause in every international forum," he added.

Anwar also called for collective action from the Muslim world to support a better future for Syria.

"The initial signs of peace and efforts to rebuild the country not only give hope to the Syrian people but also present opportunities for the entire Muslim ummah.

"Syria has the potential to become a model of peace that transcends political and sectarian divisions," he said.

The IIDC is one of the events the prime minister is scheduled to attend during his official visit to Bahrain at the invitation of Crown Prince Sheikh Salman Hamad al-Khalifa, who is also prime minister.

Anwar has met the crown prince and will have an audience with Bahrain's King Hamad Isa Al Khalifa today.

Anwar, who is finance minister, will also meet Bahraini Finance Minister Shaikh Salman Khalifa Al Khalifa, and visit the Bahrain Economic Development Board to explore economic cooperation opportunities between Malaysia and Bahrain.