

# 'Malaysians must focus on big picture'

**GEORGE TOWN:** Malaysia must focus on the bigger picture and not get distracted by provocative or racial issues, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday.

Anwar said engaging in debates over issues like the absence of mosques in tourism promotion videos, risks regressing the nation and making it racially divided.

He said Malaysia was gaining global recognition, with leaders from Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and Japan visiting the country in the past three weeks.

"We are now a focal point. In three weeks alone, we have welcomed the presidents and prime ministers from four countries, the latest being Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, which was a historic visit. We had a substantive and comprehensive meeting, discussing education and energy transition.

"With Singapore's Lawrence Wong, we spoke about cooperation to create the Johor-Singapore Economic Zone. This will ensure growth in Johor and the south of the peninsula. So, what I am saying is that we have to look at the bigger picture to retain our position as a great nation. By engaging in narrow-mindedness, racial issues, and fighting to defend wrongdoing, all this will not help our country," he said in his speech after officiating at the groundbreaking for the RM13 bil-

lion Mutiara Line Light Rail Transit (LRT) project in Bandar Sri Pinang here.

Anwar said it was important for Malaysia to maintain its position by having good relationships with China, the United States, Europe and Asia.

"If we are able to do that, I believe Malaysia will create history and further elevate its position as a great country. We want our people to face these big issues and not be influenced by racial sentiments, which can cause division.

"This (looking at the bigger picture) is why we can focus on development in Penang and other parts of the country, including Kedah, Kelantan, Sarawak, Johor, and others," he added.

Anwar called on civil servants, including at the state level, to be thinkers on how to implement positive and significant changes.

Earlier in a Facebook post, Anwar said the Madani government was committed to strengthening the country's economy and enhancing the people's socio-economic development.

He said the government was strengthening the country's image as Asean chairman this year to promote shared prosperity in the region.

Anwar said he the Mutiara Line to be expedited and hoped that project developer and asset owner MRT Corp would maintain its track record of managing this

project well.

"I also want them (MRT Corp) and the Penang government to consider requests to retain part of the Tapak Pesta, which will be used as an LRT depot.

"This is because Tapak Pesta has sentimental value for the people of Penang. Nevertheless, Penangites must also adjust.

"Similarly, I also want the Penang International Airport expansion and the Juru-Sungai Dua Elevated Highway projects to be expedited.

"All this will bring a huge impact and benefit to the state and the people. This is what investors look at when deciding on investing in the state, more so with Penang being a semiconductor hub," he said.

Present were Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow and Transport Minister Anthony Loke.

The Mutiara Line will run for 29.5km with 21 stations, including a provisional station at the Penang South Reclamation Island A (PSR-A).

The alignment, starting at PSR-A, features two tracks, one extending to Komtar and the other to Penang Sentral. Trains will run alternately on these lines.

This dual-headway alignment links Penang International Airport to Penang Sentral, allowing commuters to access the Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd's Electric Train Service and Komuter trains. Commuters can also head



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says Malaysia will be a great country if it can maintain good ties with other nations, NSTP PIC

BY MIKAIL ONG

to Komtar, which is the central interchange hub for the future metro rail.

The Mutiara Line is scheduled to begin service in December 2031.

Anwar said the Mutiara Line should have a Penang identity.

"While we strive for modernity, we also need to make this unique to Penang. As such, we should ensure that the LRT project is not only modern but also culturally rich and vibrant."

MRT Corp chief executive officer Datuk Mohd Zarif Hashim said an agreement with the main contractor of Segment One of the Mutiara Line would be signed tomorrow.

Segment One is from the Penang Silicon Island to Komtar.

"Altogether, there are three main contracts. On Monday, we will sign the first one and hope work will begin later this year."

He said MRT Corp would look into the land use at the Tapak Pesta, saying it needed only a portion of the site.

Earlier, Loke said the Mutiara Line was a significant milestone in the development of Malaysia's public transport network.

"It will enhance connectivity across Penang, improve access to major economic and cultural hubs, and serve as a catalyst for growth in key industries."

In his speech, Chow expressed his gratitude to the federal government for making the project a reality.

He acknowledged the long-standing challenges in securing federal backing for the project.

"This groundbreaking signifies not just the commencement of a significant infrastructure project, but also the strength of cooperation between the state and federal governments."