

# 'PRAGMATISM KEY TO TIES WITH CHINA, U.S.'

Anwar says it's important for nations to engage thoughtfully

## DAVOS

**P**RAGMATIC dialogue and collaboration are key to navigating international relations, particularly in Malaysia's engagements with major powers, such as the United States and China.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said it was essential for nations to engage thoughtfully and constructively.

"I haven't had the chance to engage with (US) President Donald Trump, but from what I see in his pronouncements, I believe he will approach matters pragmatically."

Anwar was speaking at the Country Strategy Dialogue session, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Summit.

He was asked about what he would ask Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping if they were to share the same stage.

The session was moderated by Investment, Trade, and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz.

While Trump's comments can be concerning in a globalised world, Anwar said he believed that Trump was well aware of interdependence.

"I think he also knows that the interests of United States, with interdependence on globalised trade, require him to listen to diverse interests outside, including China."

As for his engagements with Xi, Anwar said he observed a willingness to learn and engage on various issues, including the South China Sea, which the West often labels as contentious.

He highlighted Malaysia's unique position as a maritime state, sharing borders with several Asean countries as well as China.

"We have unresolved issues with Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines. But why is it that the problem only seems to be with China?"

"And they say, 'Oh, are you being defensive?' No, it's not the case.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim spoke at the 'Country Strategy Dialogue' session, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Summit in Davos, Switzerland. BERNAMA PIC

"I am simply stating the facts. Is there a problem? Yes, there is.

"But the issue involves the entire region. Are we going to wage war over it? No."

He expressed optimism about future collaborations, urging American companies to increase their investments in Malaysia.

"If tech giants like Intel can establish a centre of excellence in Penang, there's no reason others can't follow suit."

He added that Malaysia, as a trading nation, is always pragmatic in its approach.

"As an emerging economy dependent on trade, we have to make friends, and there's no reason why we should not do so."

He reiterated Asean's potential as a model of unity and cooperation amid global tensions, highlighting Malaysia's multicultural fabric and its commitment to fostering peace.

On a separate question about Japan's role in Asean, he said that the visit by Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba to Malaysia, which is Asean chair for 2025, underscores the importance Japan places on Asean's potential.

Among the topics discussed was the Asean Power Grid (APG), in which Japan is a key partner.

APG aims to expand the re-

gion's power transmission and distribution networks.

He also spoke on the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ).

"There is an element of trust in working together on a joint programme that will benefit one another.

"This Johor-Singapore economics is a phenomenal move, because it must be based on trust and common policies. And it is happening."

He was responding to a question on his expectation of the JS-SEZ collaboration.

He said he was looking to find any other region or subregion with such arrangements.

"Maybe they have some sort of regional understanding, but not to the extent of the Johor-Singapore economic zone," he said.

He said he was confident that the JS-SEZ would propel the economy in terms of investments, where Malaysia and Singapore can benefit.

"We are enthusiastic, and so was Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong when we had a discussion.

"I think that should be a very important showcase for Malaysia and Singapore and also for Asean and beyond." **Bernama**