

# Anwar lays out vision for more equitable world

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**I**N Rio de Janeiro this week, the city welcomed leaders for the BRICS Summit. A fresh voice entered the conversation: Malaysia, a newly engaged BRICS partner country and current chair of Asean.

Moments after touching down, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was ushered on stage alongside President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to open the BRICS Business Forum.

The prime minister delivered an address that was personal and relatable and uplifting.

At the core of his speech was a simple truth: the developing world can no longer be seen as peripheral players in a system built elsewhere. We are not relics of post-colonial history. We are rising powers in our own right, armed with moral capital, technological capacity and economic ambition.

Anwar did not merely speak for Malaysia and Asean. He articulated for the Global South its pursuit of a more equitable, responsive and plural future.

There was particular praise for President Lula, whose principled leadership has steered BRICS beyond rhetoric into something



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more consequential: a coalition with real potential to influence global structures.

Today's BRICS, Anwar noted, is not just a forum of statesmen. It includes the voices of the private sector, youth, women and civil society. That gives it a level of resilience, inclusivity and legitimacy that Bretton Woods institutions do not have, weighed down by their hierarchical and opaque structures.

Anwar's message marked clarity of purpose: Malaysia, and the Global South too, want to engage all, defer to none, and recast the architecture of global cooperation frameworks from the prism of developing nations.

As chair of Asean, Malaysia brings a regional mandate grounded in multilateralism,

economic openness and collective agency.

Anwar addressed Asean's drive to strengthen intra-regional trade and investment, deepen financial integration and promote local currencies for cross-border transactions, towards a more stable, diversified and less dollar-dependent system.

Building on this vision, the BRICS private sector could push innovative frameworks in finance, via green sukuk, climate-aligned instruments and sustainability-linked vehicles, as levers for systemic transformation.

In his interventions at the Leaders' Summit, Anwar made a strong case for closer BRICS-Asean ties. Both reflect the ambitions of the Global South, not to disrupt global order, but to rebalance it.

As economic bifurcation deepens and supply chains collapse, this dialogue helps to rebuild connectivity, fortify inter-region-

al trade and investment, and enhance collaboration in the sectors that matter.

Anwar called for nothing less than reform of the major postwar institutions, such as the United Nations, the International Mon-

etary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation, in order to reflect the 21st-century world.

The existing multilateral architecture is fraying, not for lack of ideals, but in terms of responsiveness and the failure to evolve.

On the notion that Malaysia's

partnership with BRICS is demonstrative of a geo-economic deflection from the West, particularly the United States, Anwar made it unequivocally clear that the US remains Malaysia's top source of foreign direct investment.

In terms of trade, the United States continues to be Malaysia's third-largest partner, a position it has held since 2015. Thus, any

suggestion of a shift, strategic or otherwise, is groundless.

That said, BRICS represents not a counterweight, but a counterproposal deeply rooted in inclusion, equity and shared sovereignty.

It embodies a vision of balanced multilateralism that is networked, adaptive and genuinely plural.

Make no mistake: what we saw in Rio was not a symbolic appearance. It was Malaysia stepping into a new role as bridge-builder, regional convenor and vocal proponent of a more equitable global economy.

That momentum continues in October, when Malaysia hosts the Asean Summit in Kuala Lumpur that Lula has pledged to attend — a testament to the growing stature of this partnership.

The path forward is clear: not a retreat from the multilateral order, but its reform. Not a rejection of global engagement, but its redistribution. Not a rivalry of blocs, but a realignment of priorities.

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