

'Bloc must uphold multilateralism'

KUALA LUMPUR: Asean must preserve its multilateral system to forge a more inclusive and sustainable future for the region and people.

In his keynote address at the 46th Asean Summit Plenary Session yesterday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said this position was imperative in today's multipolar setting.

"The trilateral summit manifests the successful reshaping of the matrix of partnership that speaks to today's multipolar reality," he said.

He also said with Asean's centrality spirit, Malaysia, as the chair this year, was able to convene the first-ever Asean-GCC-China Summit, demonstrating the Asean reservoir of goodwill and empowering the bloc to deepen and expand its partnerships and act with strategic clarity.

"In this regard, I must again thank you leaders for your trust, friend-

ship and excellent relations at the personal, bilateral and Asean levels that enable us to convene the first-ever trilateral summit.

"Quiet engagement matters... the bridge may be fragile, but as they say in matters of peace, even a fragile bridge is better than a widening gulf," he added.

Anwar said such achievements also bring a renewed sense of optimism and confidence to Asean, highlighting the region's resilience amid increasingly complex and challenging global circumstances.

"We are thankful for the spirit of centrality and the fraternity among Asean member states in being able to come together to forge a common front in dealing with these challenges."

Anwar said Asean would be able to withstand headwinds and weather the storms of challenges and uncertainties through its strong sense

of centrality.

"It is in this spirit that Malaysia, as chair this year, champions the theme of 'Inclusivity and Sustainability', which is a strategic and value-driven proposition.

"It speaks not only to our aspirations, but to our Obligations. It is anchored in the conviction that Asean's future must rest on the twin pillars of equitable, sustainable growth and enduring resilience."

Meanwhile, Anwar said Malaysia, as Asean chair, had written to United States President Donald Trump to organise an Asean-US meeting in the spirit of centrality.

He said this followed the consensus achieved by the Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Langkawi earlier this year.

"This means we observe our centrality spirit seriously. It does not only speak to our aspirations but our obligations too," he said.