



## On The Beat WONG CHUN WAI

AS Malaysia wraps up its role as Asean Chair, much is being said about Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's role in setting a higher benchmark for the regional group.

There have been plenty of accolades for how he steadily maintained the group's neutrality in a world complicated by political turbulence and economic uncertainty arising from geopolitical rivalries.

He also managed to win over US President Donald Trump, whose mood swings are legendary.

But there is one reason why Anwar has been able to do all this, a reason which many Malaysians take for granted: After having three prime ministers in four years leading up to the 2022 General Election, Malaysia is finally on a firmer footing.

When Anwar took office in late 2022, many wondered whether his unity government could hold. The oft asked question was, will the unity government collapse?

Three years later, the answer is clear: stability has prevailed, the government is going strong, and even his most ardent critics would admit he has handled things well.

His political critics have not managed to get the numbers to table a vote of no confidence to topple him in Parliament.

No doubt there are still grumblings that many promised reforms have not taken off fast enough, but let's not forget that the unity government has 21 political partners.

In fact, Anwar's party, PKR, does not even have the biggest chunk of the seats. It's akin to running a company with many substantial shareholders.

This is a first in our political history.

To make things worse, his con-

# Malaysia standing tall and steady again

The nation is finding itself in a position of international respect and pride, and it's thanks to a prime minister who has managed to overcome political turbulence and economic uncertainty.



**Malaysia first:** After having three prime ministers in four years leading up to the 2022 General Election, the country is finally on a firmer footing with Anwar and his Madani government. — Bernama

stant critics include Members of Parliaments who are from his unity government, with one party, which has only one MP, openly hinting it is considering pulling out from Barisan Nasional.

However, after the recent Asean Summit, many people feel that they are finally standing proud as Malaysians again. This has been widely reflected in comments posted on social media.

After the global shame of the 1MDB financial scandal with a jailed former PM, and then three PMs failing one after another, confidence at home has been restored and the nation's standing abroad elevated.

Malaysia's leadership has again been given recognition and respect. The world also re-looked at Malaysia differently but positively.

As Malaysia and the US concluded a trade agreement, uneasy investors have been assured that Malaysia will

continue to do business with the US, our third biggest trade partner, with bilateral trade in 2024 totalling RM325bil.

Malaysia's exports to the US are valued at RM198.65bil. In the first nine months of this year, exports to the US exceeded RM166.36bil.

It is important that we assure all parties, including international investors, that they will continue to compete on a level playing field.

No trade agreement would be allowed to undermine Malaysia's right to implement economic policies that serve national interests.

Our sovereignty on international political and economic matters has never changed. PMs come and go but our sovereignty remains.

All this is possible because of the power of stability. If we cannot even take care of our own country, no country is going to answer any calls from a Malaysian PM.

If the Malaysian PM could not bring his own people together, we would have been a laughing stock when we offered to mediate the dispute between Thailand and Cambodia.

But Anwar succeeded in that tough mission.

And the international community has taken notice. Anwar's engagements with leaders from China, the US, the Middle East, and Asean neighbours have signalled Malaysia's renewed confidence as a bridge-builder in global affairs.

The PM's incessant calls for fairness in international trade, support for the Palestinian cause, and emphasis on multipolar cooperation have resonated widely, reflecting Malaysia's independent yet principled foreign policy tradition.

For a while, many Malaysian businessmen, especially the non-Malays, were worried about Anwar's strong stand on Palestine and whether Malaysia, a small country, would be punished economically by the US.

Then some Muslim businessmen were uneasy about Malaysia becoming too close to China - but now some are paradoxically asking why Malaysia has become close to the US, even demanding to know if the country has sold off its sovereign rights.

Anwar's success lies in his ability to navigate Malaysia's famously complex political landscape while maintaining an emphasis on governance, inclusivity, and diplomacy.

"His pragmatic approach - anchored in reformist ideals yet tempered by political realism - has reassured both domestic stakeholders and international observers," one article reported.

"The unity government, though broad in composition, has avoided paralysis, instead channelling its diversity into consensus-building.

"This steadiness has allowed Malaysia to focus on long-term priorities: economic resilience, green growth, and social equity," it said.

Anwar has positioned himself as a voice of moderation. He became the country's first PM from a multiracial political party.

We can criticise him for many shortcomings to do with cost of living pressures, bureaucratic inertia, and political rivalries still testing the government's durability. And a few of his Cabinet ministers have not lived up to our expectations, and certainly, many challenges remain.

But under Anwar's leadership, political uncertainty continues to recede while investor confidence has risen.

The government's Madani framework - emphasising good governance, sustainability, and human dignity - has provided a clear policy direction.

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