

Malaysia to set up Centre for African Studies

JOHANNESBURG: Acknowledging the need for more engagement with African nations, the Prime Minister has taken up a suggestion to set up a Centre for African Studies in Malaysia.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the continent is vast and each of the 54 countries is different, and admitted that Malaysia's engagement with Africa was better in the 1980s and 1990s compared to now

"Realising this, the Cabinet decided that Malaysia take the initiative to forge better ties, not just for economic purposes and tapping new markets, but also for us to have better knowledge," he said at a dinner with the Malaysian diaspora in South Africa on Friday.

Present were Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's

Department (Federal Territories) Datuk Seri Dr Zaliha Mustafa, and Malaysian High Commissioner to South Africa Datuk Yubazlan Yusof.

The Prime Minister said setting up such centres is not new, citing that when he went to China, discussions had led to the opening of the Centre of Islamic Studies and Confucianism in International Islamic University Malaysia.

Likewise, there is a Centre for Asian Studies in Universiti Malaya, he added.

"Generally, we don't have a good understanding of Africa. Perhaps, by setting up a centre as such, we will get to know the continent better," Anwar said.

The Prime Minister said his visits to Ethiopia, South Africa and Kenya reflect new emphasis to expand Malaysia's network, penetrate new markets and enhance

bilateral relations.

To a question on how Malaysians abroad can help support the country's policies and causes, Anwar said they could promote the country and show good examples while living among the locals.

"One can help promote Malaysia not just as a modern and progressive country, but also her beautiful and hospitable people," he said.