

Deeper ties with Brazil and S. Africa

By **ZAKIAH KOYA**
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

Lula eyes more trade deals, Ramaphosa talks on Palestine plight

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia and Brazil reaffirmed their commitment to increasing trade as the two countries deepen their diplomatic ties and strengthen their friendship based on shared convictions, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He also said that diplomatic relations between countries should expand beyond investment, politics and culture and called for more expertise exchange.

Anwar said this at a joint media conference with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva at the Seri Perdana Complex here yesterday.

President Lula (as he is popularly known) arrived in Malaysia on Friday for his maiden official visit for three days in conjunction with the 47th Asean Summit and Related Summits which begins today.

"This is not a normal diplomacy encounter but an encounter and engagement between friends who share the same conviction and ideals. Let us make sure that our two countries and our two regions work together and become one of the key pillars in ensuring that bilateral relations extend beyond



great investments, politics and culture," said Anwar, who also thanked Lula for his commitment to the Gaza issue.

Anwar also paid tribute to Brazil for being the push behind his tendency to focus on science and research in his government policies.

In his speech, Lula said political will must be used to expand investments.

"I can't imagine that Brazil and Malaysia only have a trade of US\$6bil - there is something wrong with our business sectors and governments for that is such a low trade.

"We need Malaysia and Malaysia needs Brazil, and we (Anwar and I) will have to take care of that. We have to exchange concerns and share what we can transfer to each other. Even dances can be exchanged.

"It is unthinkable that no Brazil president had set foot here for 30

years but there is always a first time for everything," said Lula.

He also stressed on the importance of taking care of the poor as a leader of a country.

"I did not come here only to trade, but to tell Anwar that we can change the world and to tell the world that it needs peace, not war.

"National budgets of each country should be dedicated to the poor to solve basic problems of meals, education and shelter which do not cost much," said Lula.

Earlier, during a bilateral meeting, both leaders explored new avenues to strengthen cooperation in trade and investment, semiconductors, science and technology, renewable energy, halal industry, agriculture, and health and education.

They also discussed regional and global issues, including cooperation under the United Nations, BRICS, and Asean, Brazil's COP30 Presidency, and collaboration through the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty.

Later in the day, Anwar also met with South African president Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa who had said that it will continue to

voice out the issue of Gaza on the world stage, as what is taking place in Palestine is akin to its fight against apartheid.

At a joint media conference, Ramaphosa expressed gratitude for Malaysia's support when it took Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over Gaza in 2023.

"We are deeply grateful to the support given to South Africa and our support for Palestine was borne out of our own experience and during our struggle against apartheid. It is this which had motivated South Africa to raise our complaint to ICJ," said Ramaphosa, who is on a four-day official visit to Malaysia beginning Friday at the invitation of the Asean Chair.

"As much as it was risky and fraught by much opposition, we thank Malaysia for acknowledging this move.

"We will continue to seek justice for the people of Palestine, just as the world sought to seek justice when they called on the United Nations to declare apartheid a crime against humanity. We saw fit that we should act the way the world acted against apartheid," said Ramaphosa who

is making his first official visit to Malaysia since assuming office in February 2018.

On trade, Anwar said South Africa offers opportunities for Asean countries as a new marketplace.

"Malaysia is essentially a trading nation and we believe in globalisation. To effect this change, we have to open up new markets. The fundamental concern and priority is of economic collaboration. In this globalised settings, we also realise the need to extend our exchanges to other areas such as culture, arts and research.

"Malaysia cannot be totally dependent on a few countries as markets are expanding the economy is growing. We are also looking at intra-Asean trade and we have to secure friends who share the common ideals and visions. The test is not on these meetings but whether we can execute (what we have decided)," said Anwar.