

# PM: Malaysia's sovereignty intact in bilateral deals

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia did not surrender its national sovereignty and core principles in its international dealings and economic cooperation, including the recent signing of bilateral deals with the United States, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Hitting out at his critics who accused him of compromising national interests during his engagements at the 47th Asean Summit and Related Summits, the Prime Minister reiterated that Malaysia is friends with everyone.

"Some people ask, why do we seem to side with China? Yes, we have good relations with China,

but we also maintain good relations with the United States," he said.

"Some even ask why we welcome the United States so warmly and why we engage the European Union.\*

"This is because trade and investment with these countries are important.

"The decisions we make are to safeguard the nation's image and serve the interests of the people, economy and investments.

"When we maintain good relations with other nations, they trade with us; they come here as tourists, as traders, as investors and the people will benefit," he added.

In defending the move, Anwar said his discussion with US President Donald Trump was held privately, giving him a direct opportunity to raise key issues, including Israel's attacks on Gaza.

"Some people say, why discuss with President Trump?

"But those who criticise do not know that our discussion was private - a genuine, heart-to-heart, four-eyed meeting between him and me," he told a press conference at the conclusion of the summit.

On Sunday, Malaysia and the United States inked a trade deal, with the tariff rate on Malaysian goods kept at 19%, while some

1,711 Malaysian export products, including key export commodities such as palm oil, rubber, cocoa, aircraft parts and pharmaceuticals, enjoy tariffs lower than 19%.

In his conversation with Trump during the ride on "The Beast", Anwar said he raised the issue of high reciprocal tariffs imposed by Washington as well as issues related to peace and security.

"I mentioned that 19% is still high and we discussed a zero tariff rate on selected products," he said.

The Prime Minister also highlighted the signing of the Asean-China Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol, saying it's

proof of diplomatic wisdom and Asean's centrality.

"If we are scared of the United States, how is it possible that we sign this with China a day after Trump left?" he said.

Anwar also said Malaysia was open to discussions with the United States on rare earth elements (REE), semiconductors, chips and maritime matters.

On a separate matter, Anwar acknowledged that much remains to be done to resolve the humanitarian conflict in Myanmar, including the implementation of Asean's Five-Point Consensus.

"We are making every effort to bring about good and meaningful change," he said.