

# 'Build bridges over barriers'



**Making an impact:** Anwar greeting students after delivering a lecture at Tianjin University. — Pic from Anwar's Facebook page

## Anwar: Asian nations must be independent yet interdependent

TIANJIN: Asian nations should chart a path of sovereign interdependence to promote global stability, peace and resilience, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said Asia's strength lies in preserving its sovereignty while staying open to one another.

He cautioned that while globalisation had produced discontent and inequalities, its flaws should not be used to justify exclusionary blocs or economic fortresses.

Such approaches, he warned, would only deepen divisions and risk leading to stagnation.

"Malaysia proposes a different path: the path of sovereign interdependence - the art of standing tall without standing apart.

"It is the conviction that nations can remain fully themselves - sovereign in choice, in voice and in destiny - while still being open to the flows of trade and investment, of talent and technology, on which prosperity depends," he said in his public lecture at Tianjin

University yesterday.

The Prime Minister stressed that independence and interdependence should be viewed as complementary rather than opposing concepts, Bernama reported.

"We must design interdependence that fortifies sovereignty rather than undermines it.

"Interdependence should not make nations fearful that their autonomy will be diluted. It should give them confidence that, by being connected, their resilience is multiplied," he added.

He also cited the history of Chinese Admiral Zheng He's voyages, which linked Melaka with Africa and Arabia centuries ago, bringing gifts and exchanges without conquest or subjugation.

Such traditions of openness, he said, reflected a distinctly Asian model of engagement.

Anwar said that Asia, as a community of diverse nations, bears a special responsibility in shaping the next chapter of the global

order, as the region is now the engine of global growth, home to most of the world's youth and the centre of dynamic technological advances.

"For too long, debates about the world economy have been framed in trans-Atlantic terms.

"We are not merely the objects of other people's strategies. We are the authors of our own destiny. We must resist the temptation to think that the world has no alternative but to splinter into blocs.

"Fragmentation is not destiny. We can choose cooperation over coercion, bridges over barriers. We can choose sovereign interdependence," he said.

He said under Malaysia's chairmanship, Asean has adopted inclusivity and sustainability as guiding themes.

China, Anwar added, also has a unique role as a civilisational power whose choices would shape the region's openness, stability and inclusiveness.

"The region looks to Beijing not only for economic dynamism but also for confidence that Asia's future will be open, stable and respectful of diversity," he said.

At the same time, middle powers such as Malaysia have their own duty to act as bridges and remind major powers that restraint and reciprocity are the anchors of peace.

"Asia's future will rest on steadiness - on the confidence to act without haste, and the patience to give every nation the space it needs to feel secure.

"If we hold fast to that spirit, Asia can move forward with dignity, assured of its place in the world," he said.

The lecture, titled "Sovereign Interdependence: Building A Shared Future in Asia", was part of Anwar's engagement with university students and academics in conjunction with his four-day working visit to Tianjin and Beijing starting Aug 31.