



## All the pieces matter

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AT the World Economic Forum in Davos, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney delivered a bold speech that cemented his reputation and stature as a world-class statesman.

He spoke eloquently and forcefully about the “rupture” in the global world order, and he articulated an eloquent vision of the new world order that can rise from the ashes of the old one - one where middle powers like Canada (and Malaysia) can have a vital role to play.

Canadian headlines must have been all about how the whole world stood up and paid attention to the way Carney successfully positioned Canada as a era-defining leader in the middle power category of nations.

At about the same time, Malaysian headlines featured controversies about pig waste.

The government has more power than anyone else to set the national narrative - to define and determine what voters discuss in coffeeshops all across Malaysia. If the government does not vigorously set an inspiring, captivating national narrative that engages people in constructive national discourse, then people will end up talking about hog manure, and whatever else the opposition wants them to be talking about.

With around two years to the 16th General Elections (GE16), the government needs to start

# Local politics and Malaysia's global stand

**Make GE16 about Anwar's unique ability to grow Malaysia into a leading middle power globally.**

strategising carefully about the big picture narrative. In other words, it needs to have a clear and definite answer to the question: What is GE16 going to be about?

If, through neglect or indecisiveness, they cede that initiative to the opposition, then GE16 will be about the usual race and religion issues that plague and infantilise Malaysian politics. If the government seizes the initiative however, then GE16 can be all about how Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his government is displaying bold global leadership, dynamic statesmanship, and innovative diplomatic strategies in securing Malaysia's economic future.

In past elections, the management of Malaysia's economy may have been a relatively domestic matter. In 2026 however, no nation is going to be unaffected by the chaotic storms of global geopolitical change. How well the Malaysian economy performs is going to be tied directly to how well Malaysian leaders can navigate and negotiate the completely new global paradigms that are currently unfolding at breakneck speed.

Anwar and team have the opportunity to convince voters that they are best suited to seize the bull by its horns, and navigate these international storms to ensure economic prosperity for all Malaysians.

This should not be a particularly hard sell.

When it comes to using racial and religious issues to incite Malaysians against one another, Anwar (to his credit) may not be the most skilled.

But when you compare Anwar to all the other candidates for prime minister from today's opposition, no one could credibly suggest that any of them have the international stature, experience, and reputation to make things happen on an international stage.

Carney's Canada is not a nuclear power, and their GDP is ranked only 10th in the world; and yet, Carney's speech rang out among the nations.

He came across as being the kind of man that dared to say what needed saying; he articulated a just vision of the future eloquently, and he demonstrated the moral backbone of a man who could unite others in building that vision.

This is the kind of leader that others follow. Anwar is no less intelligent and no less eloquent. He handled a great many diplomatic engagements in 2025 with poise and stature - in a way clearly no one in the opposition can currently match.

I believe he can do even more.

In the time between now and GE16, Anwar and team should continue to capitalise on these strengths, for two main reasons.

One of the smarter people I know reminded me of the saying that there are decades in which nothing happens, and weeks in



**Global leadership:** Anwar should join Carney to stand up to bullies like Trump, says the writer. — Bernama

which decades happen. He also predicted that the next five to ten years would determine what the next 50 to 100 years would be like - much like World War 2.

Thus, the first reason Anwar's government should be more engaged on the global stage is because it is going to matter a lot for Malaysia. What we decide, achieve, and obtain on the global stage in these months and years - or conversely, what we fail to - will cement our trajectory for decades to come.

This is a time to put our ear as close as possible to the global ground - to pay maximum attention to the shifting sands, and where we need to stand in order to secure our future.

This is not the time to be distracted by pig waste.

The second reason is that doing so will work to Anwar's political advantage.

It is difficult for the incumbents to differentiate themselves from the opposition in all the boring, old issues Malaysia's political battles have previously been fought on - race, religion, and so on. It is easy for Anwar and team to show that the opposition very clearly lack the talent, stature, and experience to fight for Malaysia's interests on the global stage, where so much is changing so rapidly.

Of course, foreign policy cannot be the campaign's only talking point. All the usual issues and notes will still have to be hit. But there may be more to gain by focusing on global affairs than ever before.

While foreign policy has understandably not been a major electoral issue in the past, we have never seen before what we are seeing today - the United

States kidnapping heads of state, the worsening conflict in Gaza, one Nato country threatening to invade another, and so on.

Indeed, while US President Donald Trump chided Carney in public for his remarks at Davos, Trump ultimately used the same forum to walk back his threats on Greenland. It may very well be that the courage of leaders like Carney to stand up to bullies like Trump resulted in that bully backing down.

Can you imagine if Anwar was providing that kind of leadership on the global stage? Can you imagine if that's what Malaysians are talking about instead of whatever hare-brained divisive issue the opposition is bringing up again?

If Anwar and team do not take the initiative, then the narrative will be all about the false, divisive arguments about which local configuration of alliances will purportedly best serve any given race.

If they do take the initiative however, the narrative can be about how Malaysia's political parties should stop wasting time and energy fighting each other over greed and petty issues while our global position plummets; and instead think about unifying and working together, to ensure that Malaysia not only survives the madness of today's global politics, but thrives and emerges as a leader in shaping the new world order.

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