

PM's visit to Islamabad opens new chapter in Malaysia-Pakistan ties

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Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan Datuk Mohammad Azhar Mazlan said the Pakistan government has high hopes for Anwar's visit to Islamabad, especially in driving diplomatic relations between the two nations to a higher level across various areas of mutual interest. NSTP/MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

ISLAMABAD: The three-day visit by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to Pakistan, from tomorrow, is set to open a new chapter in the bilateral relations between the two countries, which have been established since Malaysia gained independence in 1957.

Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan Datuk Mohammad Azhar Mazlan said the Pakistan government has high hopes for Anwar's visit to Islamabad, especially in driving diplomatic relations between the two nations to a higher level across various areas of mutual interest.

"The Prime Minister's visit from tomorrow will open a new chapter in the diplomatic ties between Malaysia and Pakistan, which have been established since Malaysia achieved independence. The government of Pakistan has also upgraded the Prime Minister's visit from an official visit to a state visit.

"The relationship between Malaysia and Pakistan is defined as a close brotherhood between two Islamic countries, based on mutual respect and close ties between the people," he said.

Mohammad Azhar said this to a group of Malaysian journalists at a media conference held at the Malaysian High Commission building in Pakistan here today.

Malaysia and Pakistan, he said, signed a Strategic Partnership accord in 2019 and Pakistan has been Malaysia's third-largest export destination in South Asia since 2016.

"The trade value between both countries in 2023 stood at RM6.43 billion, with export from Malaysia (to Pakistan) totalling RM4.39 billion while Malaysia's import from Pakistan was RM2.04 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of RM2.34 billion in Malaysia's favour," he said.

He added that the trade value recorded between the two countries for the first seven months of this year was RM5.10 billion.

Mohamad Azhar said that Kuala Lumpur and Islamabad had also inked the Malaysia-Pakistan Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (MPCEPA) in 2008, covering trade in goods, investments and technical cooperation.

The Prime Minister, he said, has a packed schedule throughout his visit to Pakistan, right from the time his special flight lands at the Nur Khan Air Base in Rawalpindi tomorrow.

On the second day of his visit, Anwar is scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with his counterpart Shehbaz Sharif, followed by a bilateral meeting involving delegations from both countries at the official residence of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

"The bilateral meeting, to be held after the meeting between Anwar and his counterpart from Pakistan, is expected to examine various areas of cooperation, including trade relations, investment, education and connectivity between the two countries," he said.

Both leaders, he said, are also scheduled to witness the signing of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) as well as the MoU between the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority.

Mohammad Azhar said that Anwar and Shehbaz Sharif will also launch selected translated works by renowned Pakistani poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal, translated into Bahasa Melayu and the Madani Malaysia book into Urdu.

Both the leaders from Malaysia and Pakistan are scheduled to hold a media conference after that.

The Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan also said that Anwar will deliver a keynote address at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) in Islamabad, before being awarded an honorary doctorate in philosophy by the university.

In the evening, Anwar will also pay a courtesy call on the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the official residence of the President, where he will be conferred the highest civilian award of Pakistan, the Nishan-e-Pakistan.

"(The award) is the highest recognition from the Pakistani government for Anwar's leadership in fostering and enhancing bilateral relations between Malaysia and Pakistan," said Mohammad Azhar.

Anwar, he said, is also scheduled to meet Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Asim Munir, as well as other influential figures in Pakistan.