



Sultan of Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah (right) greeting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at Istana Nurul Iman in Bandar Seri Begawan yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

TWO-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT

ANWAR: THERE IS A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

PM says Brunei sultan believes that personal and family ties can strengthen bilateral ties

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DATUK Seri Anwar Ibrahim was yesterday granted an audience with Sultan of Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah during his two-day official visit to the country.

The prime minister, who was accompanied by his wife, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, arrived at Istana Nurul Iman at 11.05am.

Also in attendance during the audience was Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha.

Anwar was accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir and Malaysian High Commissioner to Brunei Datuk Raja Reza Raja Zaib Shah.

Others present were Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Abang Openg and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor.

Anwar then had a private audience with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah.

This marked Anwar's second official visit abroad after being appointed as Malaysia's 10th prime minister in November last year.

Following the audience, the

prime minister and the sultan witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida) and the Brunei Investment Agency (BIA).

The Malaysian delegation was then feted to a luncheon, hosted by Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah.

At the MoU signing, Malaysia was represented by Mida chief executive officer Datuk Arham Abdul Rahman, and BIA acting managing director Sofian Mohammad Jani signed on behalf of Brunei.

The signed document provides a preliminary understanding for both parties to hold negotiations towards the implementation and preparation of further agreements on bilateral investments, to be implemented by certain parties between Brunei and Malaysia.

The MoU entails bilateral cooperation and investment in the downstream oil and gas sector, digital economy, smart manufacturing, smart agriculture, artificial intelligence, tourism and the halal food industry.

Anwar said he believed that the personal friendship he shared with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah would help ease the implementation of plans involving both countries.

"When the leadership of both countries share a close bond, (if there are plans) I will ask about the progress and it (the implementation) will be swift.

"His Majesty has always followed the developments (in Malaysia). Close ties are important and we share good relations. During my times of trouble, His

Majesty had always expressed his concerns," he told the Malaysian media at the end of his visit.

Anwar said this was evident during his visit to Brunei.

"There is a special relationship here. His Majesty can see that personal and family ties can help strengthen bilateral relations."

Anwar said bilateral relations between both countries were at a very high level.

During his private audience with the sultan, he said, they discussed issues such as the need to accelerate border development and investment.

"This is for the people... trade, investment are important. His Majesty stressed on the need for (the cooperation with) BIA to be expedited so that we can examine the opportunities and suitability for investment.

"His Majesty also stressed on the possibility of Petronas' oil exploration efforts to be done via a joint development authority."

Anwar said apart from the issue of Indonesia's new capital, Nusantara, it was hoped that there would be a synergy for Malaysian investment, especially for Sabah and Sarawak borders.

"This would involve greater allocation, tourist traffic, tri-nation travel (Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei), as well as incentives for the Sarawak government to proceed with creating more land routes."

Anwar added that the Sarawak and Sabah governments could assist in developing Bandar Seri Begawan's role as a centre for international flights. He also hoped to see the number of flights to Bandar Seri Begawan increased to make it a sub-regional hub.