

PM: EXPLORE FOOD SECURITY POTENTIAL

S'pore urged to invest in food production in Malaysia to help reduce latter's food import bill of RM70 billion



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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Singapore has agreed to enhance discussions and

cooperation on issues related to Pedra Branca, water and airspace, as well as congestion at the Causeway.

Anwar, who was on an official one-day visit here, said he would also ask Singapore to use Malaysia as a heartland to produce food for the benefit of both countries.

Anwar said while Malaysia respected a 2008 International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling that Singapore had sovereignty over Pedra Branca, it disagreed with a former prime minister's move not to appeal the decision.

In a press conference with the Malaysian media, he said Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong agreed to look into the rea-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim being welcomed by his Singaporean counterpart, Lee Hsien Loong, at The Istana in Singapore, yesterday. PIC COURTESY OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

sons given by the task force on the environmental damage and border issues before making a final decision, but this won't have any impact on the ICJ decision.

On food security, Anwar said Singapore could invest in food production in Malaysia and this could help reduce the latter's food import bill which amounted to between RM65 billion and RM70 billion a year.

Meanwhile, Anwar — who called his Singaporean counterpart a “dear friend” — said no issues, including food security,

should be left unresolved.

In a toast speech at an official lunch hosted by Lee at The Istana to honour his visit yesterday, Anwar said both leaders had “very substantive discussions”, adding that both countries must move forward for the benefit of their people.

“These are not normal diplomatic cliches, but more contentious ongoing issues.

“No issue should be left unsolved.

“We should try and do our best to enhance our relations and

work together for the benefit of both countries.”

In his toast speech, Lee said both leaders had a fruitful discussion, including on how to make progress on outstanding bilateral issues.

Anwar and Lee had earlier witnessed the signing of three Memoranda of Understanding to promote cooperation in new and emerging areas, specifically on digital and green economies, and cyber security.

Anwar said both sides must try to work out not just areas covered

by the three agreements, but also emerging technologies and food security.

“These are areas I think Malaysia would solicit the support of Singapore to use Malaysia as a heartland to produce for the benefit of both countries.”

He added that Malaysia and Singapore could work together in multiple domains for mutual benefit and to learn from each other.

This includes housing, where he acknowledged some recent controversies, but added that Malaysia did not consider them an issue.

Malaysian officials recently received flak for consulting Singapore's Housing Development Board on housing matters.

Anwar reiterated Putrajaya's commitment to good relations with Singapore.

“You can rest assured that not only do we want to continue relations, but we want both Singaporeans and Malaysians to understand and appreciate that these are two great countries and great neighbours that could do so much more for the benefit of our people.”

Earlier yesterday morning, Anwar received an official welcome at The Istana, where he had an orchid named after him and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

He then called on President Halimah Jacob before his meeting with Lee.

While meeting with the Malaysian diaspora later, Anwar said both countries should not allow outstanding issues to drag and create unnecessary problems.

“We can resolve these challenging issues together.”