

Halal expertise offered to Laos

VIENTIANE: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim invited Laos to tap into Malaysia's halal expertise if it wishes to enter a larger market of Muslim consumers.

Speaking at a joint media conference with his Lao counterpart Dr Sonexay Siphandone at the Lao prime minister's office here yesterday, Anwar said by venturing into halal industries, especially halal food, Laos would be able to expand its export business.

"We have a small advantage in halal food industries, which I think you (Laos) should utilise so that you will be able to expand your exports to Muslim countries and the Middle East."

He arrived in Vientiane on Monday for a two-day official

Venture into sector could expand exports to Muslim nations, Anwar tells counterpart

visit to further strengthen bilateral relations and economic cooperation with the Asean member state.

Anwar's maiden visit to Laos, after being sworn in as the prime minister on Nov 24 last year, was at the invitation of Siphandone.

The premier also expressed hope of expanding the collaboration between Malaysian and Lao universities in terms of training and exchange of expertise.

Anwar reaffirmed the need for Asean to reinforce the five points of its consensus to deal with more

precarious situations as well as try to find amicable resolutions to the long-standing conflict in Myanmar, which is also affecting the security and economic welfare of both countries.

"I trust the wisdom of the (Lao) prime minister to ensure that we remain a very strong and united force of Asean."

He added that Malaysia would give full support to Laos for its assumption of the Asean chairmanship next year.

Meanwhile, Siphandone said he was delighted with Anwar's visit and the bilateral meeting

between them lasting about an hour, which was held in a brotherly spirit.

He said both countries have also agreed to work closely to enhance cooperation in various areas for the benefit of the people.

"This visit will further foster deeper understanding and advance the longstanding and robust friendship between Laos and Malaysia.

"I remain committed to working with Anwar through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, as well as in Asean, to further advance tangible benefits for the people," he said through a translator.

Siphandone said his discussion with Anwar also touched on other issues in the region, particularly their impact on socio-economic development in Asean member states.

Earlier, Anwar was accorded an official welcome ceremony by the Lao government at the prime minister's office building here, Bernama reported.

Upon arrival, Anwar, who was accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, received a flower bouquet from local school children and was greeted by Siphandone and his wife, Vandala Siphandone.

The national anthems of both countries were played followed by an inspection of a guard of honour by Anwar, accompanied by his Lao counterpart. Both leaders then proceeded to a bilateral meeting.

Anwar's visit saw the signing of memoranda of cooperation between Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad and Lao National Railway State Enterprise as well as Mutiara Perlis Sdn Bhd and Thanalang Dry Port.

Both leaders also witnessed the exchange of a memorandum of understanding between Tenaga Nasional Berhad and Electricite du Lao.



Anwar being greeted by Siphandone at the welcome ceremony. With them are Wan Azizah and Vandala. - AFP/IC