

# PM to build on close China ties

## Talks will focus on securing investment opportunities

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**BEIJING:** It's an almost devout act undertaken by Malaysia's prime ministers for about half a century, but this time round there's an added weight to it.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's visit to China will present an opportunity for him to launch a new cooperative course in the bilateral relationship.

The Prime Minister's desire to speak directly with the Chinese leadership just four months after assuming office will not just be symbolic, it will be substantive.

Diplomatic officials say this will be a good opportunity for Anwar to have constructive and meaningful dialogue with President Xi Jinping, who recently secured an unprecedented third term as he leads his nation out of the Covid-19 slump.

Malaysia's unity government head will also meet with the new holder of China's second highest post, Li Qiang, who as premier is primarily in charge of the economy.

'It will not be a visual spectacle or just a TikTok moment as China rolls out the red carpet for Anwar. He carries the huge challenge of building on the already strong business foundation with China.

"With China fully reopening from the pandemic, Malaysia will expect a return of Chinese tourists, students and investors and there will be great expectations on him."

Anwar will also have a chance to showcase Malaysia's impressive macroeconomic recovery of late," said a China watcher based in Kuala Lumpur.

Anwar's first trip as Prime Minister to the world's most populous nation is at an opportune time with both nations commemorating an important milestone and preparing for another - the 10th anniversary of the comprehensive strategic partnership signed during Xi's visit to Malaysia in 2013, and the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties to be marked in 2024.

The Anwar administration's China policy will rest heavily on the well-built and solid economic platform, with bilateral trade amassing its highest volume at the end of 2022 at US\$203.6bil (RM910.8bil), making the Middle Kingdom Malaysia's largest trading partner for the 13th year running.

And with that in mind, Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister will mean business with a huge trade delegation in tow.

Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia



**Prime movers:** Anwar will be leading a huge trade delegation to China, where the Prime Minister will be holding substantive talks with Li (left) and Xi. - AP

(ACCCIM) treasurer Datuk Koong Kin Loong said more than 150 members would participate in a Malaysia-China Business Forum to be attended by the leaders of both sides here.

"As an open economy, Malaysia needs more high value-added investments especially in high-tech, ecommerce and green technology. We need to convey a positive message across to the Chinese business world that Malaysia is ready to be their business hub for Asean and Asia-Pacific.

"We also need to nail down all possible mega projects to improve our investment infrastructure, especially on high speed rail and ports," Koong, who also chairs the body's SME committee, said.

Honorary president of the Malaysia-China Chamber of Commerce (MCCC) Datuk Tan Yew Sing said even when Covid-19 hit a peak, trade between the two coun-

tries continued to grow in double digits.

"With the existing US-China trade war, it is an inevitable trend for Chinese capital to go abroad. Our Prime Minister's visit to China will certainly promote Malaysia as an alternative friendly destination.

"Anwar will have the chance to personally market business and investment opportunities to China's investors," he told *The Star*.

Tan, who will be part of the MCCC delegation here, said China's strength in the high-tech industry was well-known globally.

"To revitalise the Malaysian economy, our government has identified the digital economy as the main pivotal mover.

"We can benefit from China's experience in digitisation and its abundant supply of research manpower while China's investors can leverage on Malaysia's vital role in the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive

Economic Partnership), thus striving for a win-win strategic partnership and common prosperity," he added.

Tai Teik Hing, secretary-general of the One Belt One Road Malaysia Association, said the dimension of Anwar's visit would be much different than that by previous prime ministers.

"He will be looking beyond everything explored before, such as on infrastructure development. China is moving on to higher level of its Belt & Road Initiative.

"Besides, there is also science, technological and innovative advancements since. We have a good momentum going on with China at the moment and the PM can build on this with his great networking skills," he added.

Anwar is scheduled to speak at the Annual Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) 2023 in Hainan on Thursday before heading here.