

Malaysia, Vietnam vow to tackle illegal fishing

SAN FRANCISCO: Malaysia and Vietnam have agreed to boost cooperation to tackle the long-standing issue of illegal fishing in Malaysian waters.

The agreement was reached between Putrajaya and Hanoi following a bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and President Vo Van Thuong on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Economic Leaders meeting (AELM) here yesterday.

The leaders, who met at Hanoi's request, also discussed the issue of the South China Sea and agreed on the need for all parties to adhere to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties

in the South China Sea.

The declaration is a non-binding agreement between Asean countries and China to promote peace, stability and cooperation in the sea by adhering to a framework for managing disputes.

Anwar and Vo also discussed ways to increase trade and enhance bilateral cooperation, with the former extending an invitation to the latter to undertake a state visit to Malaysia next year.

Vo also requested Malaysia to assist in the certification of halal products from Vietnam.

He also thanked Malaysia for training its officials under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, apart from

proposing sister-city cooperation between Vietnam and Malaysia.

Both leaders reiterated their support for Laos as the country prepares to assume the chairmanship of Asean next year.

The issue of Vietnamese fishing vessels encroaching on Malaysian waters in the South China Sea has been a long-standing problem.

Illegal fishing by these boats has been identified as a threat to Malaysian fishery resources and its territorial sovereignty.

Vietnam's fishing conflict with Malaysia saw 64 of its illegal fishing boats being seized and more than 400 fishermen detained by Malaysian maritime authorities in 2021 alone.

The Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) is believed to have seized nearly 2,000 Vietnamese boats since 2006.

Reports also showed that from April 2019 to April 2021, 1,609 Vietnamese fishermen on 159 fishing vessels were arrested, involving seizures worth RM493.4 million.

The total losses incurred by Malaysia due to illegal fishing is said to be in the around RM6 billion every year.

Vietnam is Malaysia's 12th largest trading partner globally, and it is also the country's fourth largest trading partner in Asean



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong meeting in San Francisco yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

after Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand.

The total bilateral trade between both nations increased from US\$16.7 billion in 2021 to US\$19.44 billion last year.

In terms of investment, Malaysia is Vietnam's 10th largest investor after Singapore and Thailand.

On a separate issue, Anwar thanked the Peruvian authorities for rescuing 43 Malaysian victims of human trafficking and labour exploitation in the South American country recently.

Anwar conveyed his appreciation to President Dina Ercilla Boluarte Zegarra on the sidelines of the AELM here yesterday.

He reiterated Malaysia's commitment to continue training Peruvian officials under the Malaysian Technical Coopera-

tion Programme and to learn from each other's expertise.

In response, Boluarte conveyed her government's commitment to combat human trafficking.

She also invited Anwar to visit Peru next year in conjunction with Apec 2024, which Peru is chairing, and called on Malaysian businesses to visit and invest in the country.

Boluarte also requested Malaysia to consider opening an office in Peru to help facilitate halal certification of its products.

Malaysia-Peru trade is on the rise, with January to June figures reaching US\$168.45 million (RM751.77 million) for trade conducted between both sides.

This was an increase of 12.8 per cent from US\$155.97 million (RM666.44 million) recorded in the same period last year.