

Border road project to be sped up

Anwar discusses connectivity and bilateral cooperation with Thai PM

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BUKIT KAYU HITAM: Efforts are being made to speed up the road alignment project connecting the checkpoints of Malaysia-Thailand border, with a final decision in two weeks.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the project, linking the Bukit Kayu Hitam Immigration, Customs, Quarantine and Security (ICQS) checkpoint and the Sadao Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) Complex, was vital in ensuring faster and more comfortable traffic flow on both sides.

"The alignment project has been delayed and must be done immediately. It took some time because it involved military areas.

"Within two weeks we will make a final decision to iron out the matter," he told a press conference at the Bukit Kayu Hitam ICQS Complex yesterday.

Anwar was on a one-day working trip to Thailand at the invitation of his Thai counterpart Srettha Thavisin.

The visit, among others, was



Enhancing travel: The newly built Sadao CIQ Complex. Once the road alignment project is completed, Malaysians and Thais will be able to travel comfortably and faster between checkpoints. — Bernama

aimed at reviewing the progress of the road alignment project.

Hatyai, a city located near the Thai-Malaysian border, has always been the travel destination of choice for many Malaysians, especially during school and public holidays.

Following the re-opening of the Thailand-Malaysia border on April 1 last year, the influx of tourists has increased and the city

of Hatyai is coming back to life after a two-year break due to the pandemic.

In the first eight months of last year, Thailand recorded more than 4.6 million international tourist arrivals, with Malaysians making up the bulk of the number with 647,648 people.

Both Anwar and Srettha also engaged in a closed door meeting followed by a lunch hosted by the

latter in honour of Anwar's visit.

Anwar said there was clear commitment from Thailand towards enhancing bilateral relations with Malaysia.

"He (Srettha) is committed to enhancing bilateral relations within the two countries. He is a good friend and he is committed to this relationship.

"We will focus on speeding up the construction of the connectivity projects at the border which is aimed at promoting business and improving the well-being of the people.

"Things cannot be delayed anymore as we want to have growth which include the tourism sector as well. He (Srettha) was concerned that the number of tourists from Malaysia to Thailand was far more than from Thailand to Malaysia.

"He has instructed their Tourism Minister to meet ours, so both can gain from each other

"This will create synergy and increase tourist arrivals in both countries like in the southern part of Thailand, Langkawi, Kedah, Perlis, and Penang," he said.

Anwar said Srettha went into detail about his plans and suggestions, even going as far as to say

that Phuket has done well on an international level.

"He asked his tourism minister to share ideas that can be implemented in Langkawi for a similar synergy to be created.

"This is rare of someone who wants to offer his experience and expertise.

"We will share our insight with him and he will share his with us which will have a positive impact on both countries," he said.

Anwar said discussions on all issues related to bilateral relations during the meeting would be prepared within two weeks, and all the meeting notes would be shared with the Thai authorities for feedback.

"I have given two weeks to complete and make final decisions on all issues and plans which have not been resolved in the past. If some of them cannot be resolved in the next two weeks, the latest will be at the end of February 2024," he said.