

PM in S'pore for leaders' retreat

Anwar set to discuss new initiatives, cross-border movements and finalise SEZ terms

SINGAPORE: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is in Singapore to attend the 10th Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat. A statement from Wisma Putra said Anwar will be meeting his counterpart, Lee Hsien Loong, to discuss measures on advancing relations and cooperation between the two countries, including new initiatives related to smooth connectivity, cross-border movements as well as collaboration on green energy.

"Both leaders will also witness the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in the field of entrepreneurship and a side letter to improve provisions of the Third Malaysia-Singapore Business Development Fund (MSBDF).

"A leaders' joint statement will

be issued after the retreat," the statement said yesterday.

Anwar is accompanied by several ministers including Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir. The others are Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Aziz, Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail and Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Minister Datuk Ewon Benedick.

Other delegates are Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Zohari Openg, Johor Mentri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi and Attorney General Datuk Ahmad Terrirudin Mohd Salleh.

Wisma Putra said Anwar is also scheduled to pay a courtesy call on President Tharman Shanmugaratnam at Istana Singapura.

It added that the Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat is the highest level of bilateral mechanism between the two countries, hosted alternately since 2007.

This will be the first meeting between Anwar and Lee in the framework of the retreat. The statement said Malaysia and Singapore share deep-rooted and multi-faceted ties.

"In the economic aspect, Malaysia and Singapore are each other's second largest trading partners, with a total trade value of RM368.19bil in 2022, reflecting a 37.6% increase compared to the trade value in 2021," it added.

Earlier, it was reported that leaders from both countries are expected to finalise the terms of reference on a proposed special economic zone (SEZ) of which Johor is expected to be the main beneficiary compared with other states in the country.

In June, Onn Hafiz told the state assembly that both countries agreed to create a special task force to study the establishment of the SEZ. He said recently that with the SEZ, Johor could become the next Shenzhen, a global centre in technology, research, manufacturing, business and economics, finance, tourism and transportation in China.

Johor investment, trade and consumer affairs committee chairman Lee Ting Han had said that

SEZ is important for Johor as the state wants to reignite the people's imagination over the Iskandar Malaysia area and to bring in more investors to the region.

Iskandar Malaysia covers an area of about 2,300sq km. There are five local authorities under Iskandar Malaysia, namely Johor Baru City Council, Iskandar Puteri City Council, Pasir Gudang City Council, Kulai Municipal Council and Pontian Municipal Council.

Statistics showed that Johor received total approved investments of RM70.6bil last year, which is the highest in Malaysia. This was followed by Selangor with RM60.1bil, Sarawak with RM28.2bil, Kuala Lumpur with RM25bil and Penang with RM16.3bil.