

# Improving links with S'pore

## Malaysia and republic reaffirm many commitments

**PETALING JAYA:** Improving cross-border connectivity and easing congestion between Malaysia and Singapore are among the many commitments reaffirmed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his Singapore counterpart Lee Hsien Loong.

At the 10th Singapore-Malaysia Leaders' Retreat yesterday, both Prime Ministers said the Immigration and Transportation Links Work Groups, under the Joint Ministerial Committee for Iskandar Malaysia (JMCIM), worked closely to strengthen infrastructure and cross-border connectivity between Singapore and Johor.

"Transport agencies from both countries also made progress in strengthening their transport links and improving commuters' experience, by increasing the frequency of cross-border bus services and introducing new ferry-services," Anwar and Lee said in a joint statement yesterday.

They also reaffirmed their commitment to improving connectivity between Singapore and Malaysia and easing congestion at the landborder.

Officials from both countries have also been encouraged to continually exchange ideas to improve the efficiency and experience of cross-border travel for their peoples.

"Efforts made by agencies from both countries to address congestion at the land border are welcome," they said, noting Singapore's plans to redevelop the Woodlands Checkpoint to further smoothen cross-border movement of people and goods.

On the ongoing construction of the Johor Baru-Singapore Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link, Anwar and Lee said it was a mutually beneficial project which would alleviate congestion along the Causeway and further strengthen connectivity between the two countries.

"Both leaders similarly expressed confidence in the commencement of the RTS Link service by the end of 2026 and (they)



**Friendly neighbours:** Anwar and Lee talking in private after attending the Singapore-Malaysia Leaders' Retreat at the Istana in the city-state. - Bernama

look forward to attending the ceremony in early 2024 to commemorate the historic completion of the drop-in span, connecting both sides of the marine viaduct," their joint statement read.

Separately, Anwar and Lee welcomed plans on the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) in January next year.

A special task force was previously established under the JMCIM to study the JS-SEZ.

"The JS-SEZ will tap into the complementary strengths of both countries to foster economic connectivity by improving cross-border flows of goods, investments and people," the two premiers said.

Anwar and Lee also commended the Industrial Cooperation Work Group and agencies from both countries for working together closely to facilitate high-profile investments into, and creating jobs in, Iskandar Malaysia.

On the water supply to Singapore, the Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitments as provided for in the 1962 Johor River Water Agreement (62WA), and agreed to reconvene the Joint Technical Committee between Singapore's Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment and Malaysia's Natural Resources, Energy and Climate Change Ministry.

This is to resume discussions on measures to safeguard water quality, as well as increase the yield of the Johor river to ensure its sustainable supply to the extent required by the 62WA.

At a joint press conference, Anwar said Malaysia should honour the commitment to supply water from Johor to Singapore.

"To that end, we will have to work jointly and ensure Johor will be able to enhance its capacity, through the Johor river, to supply both for Johor and Singapore's needs.

"Instead of focusing purely on the price mechanism, we should

look at the possibility of Singapore participating in a joint effort, both in terms of a study that can be conducted immediately, and in terms of management of the Johor river, particularly with the Johor state," he said.

On the Batu Puteh maritime boundary delimitation, Anwar said attorneys general from both countries should hold discussions immediately.

"Malaysia and Singapore's Prime Ministers should showcase how two great friends can try and resolve in a win-win situation," he said at the press conference.

This is Anwar's maiden appearance at the retreat since becoming Malaysia's Prime Minister.

The 11th Singapore-Malaysia Leaders' Retreat will be held in Malaysia next year.