

KL, NEW DELHI RESET TIES

Comprehensive strategic partnership an important step forward, says PM



MAGENDRAN RAJA GOPAL

NEW DELHI

MALAYSIA and India have agreed to elevate their bilateral relations from an enhanced strategic partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership, said Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The prime minister, who was on a three-day official visit to India since Monday, emphasised the ease of discussions between the two countries, saying the joint decision to enhance ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership was an important step forward.

He acknowledged the long-standing relationship between Malaysia and India, dating back to the times of Jawaharlal Nehru and Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj.

"This (the relationship) must be strengthened across various fields," he said, citing sectors such as digital investments, trade, construction, agriculture, education, research and military cooperation, including joint border security operations.

Anwar said this at a joint press conference with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the latter's official residence, Hyderabad House, here. Anwar was earlier accorded an official reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Presidential Palace.

He thanked Modi and the Indian government for the warm welcome and said Malaysia regarded India as a "good and true friend".

"He (Modi) has given his assurance that India is committed to Malaysia in reinvigorating this working relationship across all areas. Our discussions, both in bilateral meetings and private conversations, have been open and candid, covering all issues, including sensitive ones, reflecting the true meaning of friendship."

He expressed regret over the lack of progress in recent years



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi in New Delhi yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

but highlighted the potential for greater collaboration.

Anwar also discussed new initiatives that will encourage further collaboration between Indian and Malaysian companies, particularly in energy transition, digitalisation and food security.

He touched on the importance of cooperation in the semiconductor industry, where Malaysia is recognised as a hub in South-east Asia, and acknowledged India's achievements in this field.

Anwar said both he and Modi want the resolution to any bilateral government-to-government issues to be expedited.

He said issues such as flights, visas and other aspects were "found to be somewhat delayed".

"I know Modi's work style... he does not tolerate excessive delays. So we have set a three-month timeframe for our staff to report back to us on the latest developments, from health and education to energy and digital innovation.

"With this commitment, I believe Malaysia and India can emerge as two strong entities, reflecting Modi's results-oriented approach."

On tourism, India views Malaysia, which has the largest Indian-descent population in Southeast Asia, as a major target for bilateral travel, especially with Visit Malaysia Year 2026.

As such, Anwar said, Malaysia had requested for additional air traffic rights and routes in India for Malaysian airlines.

On immigration, at present, Malaysia has provided visa-free entry for Indian citizens from Dec 1 last year to Dec 31 this year, while India has waived the e-Tourist visa fees from July 1 this year to June 30 next year.

Moving forward, said Anwar, India and Malaysia will work towards a reciprocal visa-free entry arrangement to facilitate and enhance trade and business, as well as international tourism, and to streamline procedures to improve travel facilities.

The joint press conference was

held after both leaders witnessed the signing of eight memoranda of understanding covering the recruitment of foreign workers, traditional medicine, digital technologies, culture, tourism and public administration.

The first MoU, concerning the recruitment, employment and repatriation of workers, was inked between Human Resources Minister Steven Sim and India's External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar.

The second MoU, on Ayurveda and traditional medicine, was exchanged between Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan and his counterpart, Jaishankar.

The MoU on cooperation in digital technologies was exchanged between Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo and Jaishankar.

The MoU on cooperation in culture, arts and heritage was exchanged between Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing and Jaishankar.

They also exchanged another MoU on tourism cooperation.

The MoU on public administration and governance reforms was exchanged between Public Service Department director-general Datuk Seri Wan Ahmad Dahlan Abdul Aziz and India's External Affairs Ministry secretary (east) Jaideep Mazumdar.

An MoU on cooperation in the field of youth and sports was exchanged between Mohamad and Indian High Commissioner to Malaysia B.N. Reddy.

An MoU between the International Financial Services Centres Authority and the Labuan Financial Services Authority was exchanged between the latter's chairman Datuk Wan Mohd Fadzmi Che Wan Othman Fadzilah and Jaishankar.

Page 1 pic: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim being greeted warmly by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Presidential Palace in New Delhi yesterday.