

Malaysia, India navigating 21st-century challenges together

MALAYSIA-INDIA ties have entered a new era of strategic partnership, marked by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's visit to India from Aug 19 to 21.

This visit, Anwar's first to South Asia, wasn't just another diplomatic trip but one prodded by a desire to deepen the links between the two countries, underscored by the enhanced strategic partnership established in 2015.

The symbolic gestures, like the ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Raj Ghat, set the stage for meaningful conversations between Anwar and his counterpart Narendra Modi.

The body language exhibited by them — walking into the ceremonial hall hand in hand and grinning from ear to ear — was not lost on those present.

The leaders did not fail to seize the moment to recognise the depth of the historical ties between Malaysia and India, noting that the time was ripe to elevate the relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

Their joint statement was a testament to the breadth of both nations' cooperation, touching on everything from defence to digital economy, healthcare to higher education, and trade to tourism.

Recognising that the future of Malaysia-India relations lies in



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the hands of the younger generation, both leaders stressed the importance of youth exchanges and the role of young people in driving innovation and future development.

Another significant outcome was the signing of memoranda of understanding on employment, digital technologies and financial services.

On the regional front, the leaders agreed to expedite the review of the Asean-India trade agreement to make it more effective, user friendly and simple for businesses.

At the bilateral level, both leaders noted the need to convene the second joint committee meeting of the Malaysia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement to facilitate trade and investment flows.

These initiatives come at an opportune moment, as exports to India are projected to exceed RM8 billion following the discussions during the visit.

India has expressed an interest



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, On Aug 20. BERNAMA PIC

in importing a range of Malaysian products, including palm oil and palm products, chemicals, oil and gas, and parts and components for the aviation sector.

In addition to energy transition and food security, digital economy also featured in the discussions.

The success of India's Unified Payments Interface was acknowledged, with both sides committing to further collaborations in digital payments.

In his public lecture at the Indian Council of World Affairs,

with which Isis Malaysia has signed an MoU, Anwar spoke of the "vibrant symbiosis" between Malaysia's and India's respective comparative advantage.

Malaysia, as the world's sixth largest semiconductor exporter, has expertise in the assembly, testing and packaging segments of the semiconductor value chain, while India's capabilities in software are almost unparalleled.

The leaders took a firm stand against terrorism, calling for collective action and ensuring that

no country harbours terrorists.

Malaysia's support for India's permanent membership in a reformed United Nations Security Council was a significant gesture, solidifying a shared vision for global peace and cooperation.

The leaders touched on global and regional challenges, with a shared commitment to multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

Malaysia appreciated India's role in initiatives like the Voice of the Global South Summit, while India looked forward to Malaysia's Asean chairmanship in 2025.

The cultural ties between the two nations were also a focus, with both sides welcoming the establishment of the Tiruvalluvar Chair of Indian Studies at Universiti Malaya, an initiative that resonates with me, having taken electives in Indian Studies way back then.

But this is less about academics than about preserving and fostering the cultural heritage that binds Malaysia and India.

As the visit concluded, Anwar extended an invitation to Modi to visit Malaysia.

This visit was about resetting the relationship, preparing both countries to navigate the challenges of the 21st century together, guided by a shared vision of prosperity and security.

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