

Thaksin appointed informal adviser on Asean chairmanship

PUTRAJAYA: Former Thailand premier Thaksin Shinawatra (*pic*) has been appointed by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as his informal adviser on Malaysia's chairmanship of Asean.

The Prime Minister said Thaksin's advice would bode well for Malaysia, given his experience as a statesman.

"I have agreed to appoint (Thaksin) as my personal adviser with a team of members from Asean countries in an informal set-up.

"Thank you for agreeing to this because we need the experience of such statesmen," Anwar said during a joint press conference after welcoming Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra in Perdana Putra yesterday.

He said Thaksin's appointment was proposed by Malaysia and agreed to by Thailand.

"We also proposed the setting up of an informal advisory group to the Asean chair that consists of former Asean leaders to share expertise and contribute ideas on Asean issues," Anwar said.



Thaksin served as the Thai prime minister from 2001 to 2006 before he was ousted in a military coup.

The 74-year-old billionaire lived in self-imposed exile for 15 years before returning to Thailand in August last year.

Upon returning, Thaksin was jailed for eight years on corruption and abuse of power charges.

His sentence was reduced to one year by Thai King Maha

Vajiralongkorn and Thaksin was released on parole on Feb 18 this year.

During the joint press conference, Anwar said he regarded Paetongtarn as a great family friend.

"We are welcoming her to a second home in Malaysia.

"Although she has been in office for just four months, she has done remarkably well and I'm extremely pleased because she takes Malaysia as an important friend," said Anwar.

The Prime Minister also thanked Thailand for having the same position on the accession of Timor-Leste as a full member of Asean.

"They are working hard to make sure that some of the conditions imposed are met before we firm up the initial meeting with Asean, hopefully towards the end of May," Anwar added.

Paetongtarn said she was honoured to be in Malaysia and that many issues were discussed.

"On economic cooperation, we will focus on efforts to strengthen

trade and investments, border connectivities, digital economy and tourism," she added.

Paetongtarn also said the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on cooperation in the field of culture, arts and heritage, and the MOU for the development of rubber industry and economic cooperation that was signed on Dec 16, would be beneficial to both countries.

She said the main purpose of her visit is to reaffirm the importance of Thai-Malaysia relations and its cooperation in a wide range of issues.

"I am committed to maintaining the dynamics of our relationship and our efforts towards common peace and prosperity," she added.

Paetongtarn also extended an invite to Anwar for an official visit to Thailand.

"I will be your tour guide and arrange all the nice places to visit," she said.

Earlier, Paetongtarn with her husband Pitaka Suksawat, was given an official welcoming cere-

mony at Dataran Perdana here.

She then inspected a guard of honour mounted by three officers and 102 members of the First Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment.

Paetongtarn and Anwar then held a bilateral meeting and chaired the 7th Malaysia-Thailand Annual Consultation.

According to Wisma Putra, the visit is also part of the exchange of visits at the leaders' level this year, following the working visit of the Prime Ministers of Malaysia and Thailand to Sungai Golok, Thailand and Rantau Panjang on Aug 3.

"The visit further reaffirms the longstanding friendship and close ties between the two countries as close neighbours and partners in Asean," said Wisma Putra.