



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong pose for a picture under the connecting span of the Rapid Transit System Link at the project site in Johor Baru yesterday, PIC BY NUR AISYAH MAZALAN

## BRIDGE BETWEEN COUNTRIES

# ANWAR, LEE MARK RTS LINK MILESTONE

**With vital connecting span completed, next phase will see Singapore install rail operation networks**

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**T**HE Johor Baru-Singapore Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link was a step closer to realisation yesterday with the completion of the connecting span.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his Singaporean counterpart, Lee Hsien Loong, officiated the 17.1m-long reinforced concrete connecting span at the RTS Link project site near the Straits of Johor.

The structure connects both sides of the marine viaduct at Malaysia's Pier 47 and Singapore's Pier 48. The connecting span, weighing about 340 tonnes, was constructed using steel support structures, standing more than 26m above sea level.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke said the bilateral government-to-government project was progressing as scheduled towards its Jan 1, 2027 launch.

The work on the Malaysian side had surpassed the target, reaching 65 per cent completion up to the end of last year.

The next phase would see the Singaporean side installing the

networks for the rail operation.

Loke said a third mode of transportation to connect Johor and the republic by sea using ferries was among matters that would be discussed between the countries if the need arose in the future.

Singapore's Acting Transport Minister Chee Hong Tat said RTS Operations Pte Ltd would install the systems in the next phase.

He said all 12 piling caps, which form the foundation for the piers supporting the 730m RTS Link's marine and land viaducts on the Singapore side, were completed, while construction of the piers and the launch of the viaduct segments were ongoing.

The RTS Link project is a 4km rail shuttle service between Bukit Chagar in Johor and Woodlands North in Singapore. It will take five minutes between the stations, with a peak capacity of 10,000 passengers per hour.

About 350,000 people cross the Causeway daily.

To shorten travelling time and congestion, the Bukit Chagar and Woodlands North stations would host customs, immigration and quarantine facilities, allowing travellers to clear immigration at the departure points.

Later, Anwar and Lee witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding for the Johor-Singapore special economic zone (JS-SEZ) between Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli and Singapore's Trade and Industry Minister Gan Kim Yong.

This came two months after the 10th Singapore-Malaysia Leaders' Retreat in October, underscoring the continued efforts to establish a

comprehensive agreement on the JS-SEZ. The finer details are set to be ironed out at the 11th Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat.

Rafizi said the JS-SEZ opened up unprecedented economic opportunities by facilitating cross-border flow, fortifying the business ecosystem and enhancing economic ties.

"I have full confidence the JS-SEZ initiative is the beginning of a transformation in the economies of both countries, fostering unparalleled relations and prosperity for Malaysia and Singapore."

Gan said the JS-SEZ exemplified the potential when both nations complement each other and collaborate closely.

He said he was eagerly anticipating the implementation of the JS-SEZ, expecting it to bring substantial benefits to the business community and the people of both countries.

"It will be a bridge for both countries to leverage each other's strengths and seize opportunities for mutual growth."

Rafizi proposed establishing the zone after a meeting with the Johor government in Iskandar Puteri in May last year.

Two months later, both countries agreed to take further steps by establishing a task force to examine the progress of the proposed special economic zone.

In 2022, Johor recorded foreign investments worth RM70.6 billion in various sectors. As the state's second-largest foreign investor, Singapore contributed about 70 per cent to Johor's total foreign direct investment in the manufacturing sector.