

Anwar visits renowned Kazakh mosque

ASTANA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has started his inaugural two-day official visit to Kazakhstan by visiting the Astana Grand Mosque located along the historic Silk Route here.

Anwar, who arrived at the mosque at 2.20pm local time (5.20pm Malaysian time) yesterday, was welcomed by Astana mayor Zhenis Kassymbek and chief mufti of the mosque Nauryzbai Taganuly Optenov, who is also the chairman of the Kazakhstan Spiritual Administration of Muslims, reported Bernama.

During the 20-minute visit, Anwar joined the congregation in prayers and was briefed by Kassymbek on the construction of the mosque, which was completed in 2022 and can accommodate about 235,000 worshippers.

On his visit to the mosque, Anwar was accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan; Investment, Trade, and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz; Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing; Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Datuk Dr Mohd Na'im



Warm welcome: Olzhas Bektenov (second from right) receiving Anwar at Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport. - Bernama

Mokhtar; and Malaysian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Mohd Adli Abdullah.

The mosque features the world's largest blue main dome, standing at almost 83.2m high with a diameter of 62m. It is surrounded by four minarets, each reaching 130m high. Kazakhstan, the ninth largest country and the largest landlocked country in the world, has a population of approximately 20 million, with over 70% of its

population Muslims.

Anwar's visit to Kazakhstan symbolises Malaysia's commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation with Kazakhstan since March 16, 1992, covering various sectors such as trade, investment, higher education, tourism, halal industry, and others of mutual benefit.

He was scheduled to be accorded an official welcome by Kazakhstan President Kassym-

Jomart Tokayev at the President's Palace (Ak Orda) before the two leaders engage in a bilateral meeting for a broader discussion involving both delegations.

Anwar and the Malaysian delegation will be honoured with a banquet hosted by Tokayev.

Before concluding his visit today, Anwar is scheduled to deliver a keynote address at the roundtable session on trade and investment cooperation between Malaysia and Kazakhstan here.

Kazakhstan Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov is also scheduled to attend the session, which aims to foster collaboration and partnership between companies in both countries in the economic, trade and investment sectors.

The Prime Minister is also scheduled to witness the exchange of several memoranda of understanding involving relevant government agencies and businesses from both sides.

Malaysia's total trade with Kazakhstan in 2023 stood at RM474.5mil, comprising RM465.6mil exports of Malaysian goods to Kazakhstan and RM8.9mil in imports from Kazakhstan.

Anwar will proceed with an official visit to Uzbekistan next.