

Anwar gets Pakistan honour

PM conferred highest civilian award for enhancing bilateral relations

ISLAMABAD: Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has been conferred the Nishan-e-Pakistan, its highest civilian award, by Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari in a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the Presidential Palace here.

The Prime Minister, who was on a three-day state visit to the country, had paid a courtesy call on Zardari.

"(The award) is the highest recognition from the Pakistani government for Anwar's leadership in fostering and enhancing bilateral relations between Malaysia and Pakistan," Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan Datuk Mohammad Azhar Mazlan told Malaysian media.

Also attending the award ceremony on Thursday were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz, and other members of the Malaysian delegation.

After the ceremony, Zardari hosted Anwar to a state banquet at the Presidential Palace, reported Bernama.

The government of Pakistan had also conferred the award on the then prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2019.

Malaysia and Pakistan established diplomatic relations back in 1957 when Malaysia gained its



Appreciation of excellence:

Anwar being conferred the Nishan-e-Pakistan award by Zardari during the ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Islamabad, Pakistan. Also present is Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif (right).

- Bernama

independence, in 2019, Malaysia and Pakistan signed a Strategic Partnership accord.

Kuala Lumpur and Islamabad also inked the Malaysia-Pakistan Closer Economic Partnership Agreement in 2008, covering trade in goods, investments and technical cooperation.

Pakistan has been Malaysia's third largest export destination in South Asia since 2016.

Bilateral trade between the two countries last year stood at RM6.43bil, with exports from

Malaysia totalling RM4.39bil while the country's imports from Pakistan were RM2.04bil, with a trade surplus of RM2.34bil in Malaysia's favour.

For the first seven months of this year, bilateral trade between Malaysia and Pakistan amounted to RM5.10bil.

Later in Dhaka, Anwar said Malaysia will give major consideration to the applications of Bangladeshi workers who lost the opportunity due to political developments in their country.

He said the Bangladeshi government had appealed to Malaysia on the possibility of increasing workers and professional intake from the country.

"I will certainly give that major consideration, at least the first phase, subject to all conditions being met, can be taken as soon as possible," he said in a joint press conference with Chief Adviser of Bangladesh's Interim Government Dr Muhammad Yunus after a bilateral meeting yesterday.

Anwar is on a one-day visit

to Bangladesh.

On investment, Anwar said both countries should prioritise giving attention and preference to investing firms, ensuring that any problems were addressed swiftly and in a transparent manner.

"Our focus is governance, anti-corruption and economic fundamentals. We do not compromise this because we don't need to associate political leaders with amassing wealth and enriching themselves, their families or their cronies," he said.

"I understand fully well that though we want Malaysian companies operating here (in Bangladesh) to be given adequate consideration, I will not compromise on issues of transparency and due diligence in the process."

Anwar also said both countries would be looking at enhancing collaboration in higher education, agriculture, the halal economy and the semiconductor industry.

"We can fast track in terms of negotiation and trade arrangement but what is important is having the joint commission meeting as soon as possible," he said.

Last year, Bangladesh was Malaysia's 27th largest trading partner, 19th largest export destination and 47th largest source of imports. The total trade between Malaysia and Bangladesh reached RM12.7bil (US\$2.78bil).