

### 3-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT

## 'Anwar's trip will greatly enhance economic ties'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's visit to Pakistan next week is expected to enhance economic ties between the two countries.

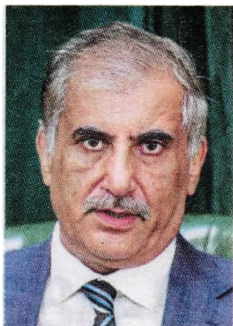
His three-day visit starting on Wednesday comes as the two countries are keen to expand their relations in a wide range of areas, including greater collaborations in the halal industry.

Pakistani High Commissioner to Malaysia Syed Ahsan Raza Shah said despite bilateral trade totalling more than US\$1 billion between both countries, there was a need to renew a trade agreement and

explore new avenues that could benefit both countries.

"Our bilateral trade is US\$1.5 billion a year. But it is not enough. I think it is not commensurate with the levels of our diplomatic relations and needs to be greatly enhanced," he told a press briefing at the Pakistani High Commission here.

He noted that while Malaysia's biggest exports to Pakistan included palm oil and electrical equipment, and Pakistan's largest exports to Malaysia were rice, vegetables and textiles, the trade volume could be significantly improved.



*Syed Ahsan Raza Shah*

According to Syed Ahsan, there were talks to rework the Malaysia-Pakistan Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (MPCEPA), which was signed in 2007.

He also highlighted the potential for cooperation in the halal industry, given that Pakistan is among the largest Muslim countries.

Tourism is another key focus, with Malaysia being one of the sources of tourism in Pakistan.

This "halal tourism", as Syed Ahsan put it, involved increasing the number of direct flights between the two countries.

He said there were currently 175,000 Pakistanis in Malaysia, including 4,000 students, as Malaysia had emerged as a top destination for Pakistani students due to the high standard of education.