

# Travel ties deepen, halal focus shared

## Malaysia and Maldives set to expand cultural ties through VM2026

**PUTRAJAYA:** Malaysia and the Maldives have agreed to enhance cooperation through the "Visit Malaysia 2026" campaign and explore opportunities for increase tourism flows between the two nations, including Muslim-friendly and halal tourism.

The commitment was made during the four-day official visit, which began on Sunday, of Maldives President Dr Mohamed Muizzu to Malaysia at the invitation of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Recognising the potential of their respective economies, Anwar and Muizzu expressed their confidence in the ongoing growth of trade, tourism and investment activities.

Muizzu has also invited Malaysian investors to actively explore the vast investment opportunities in the Maldives across multiple sectors, Bernama reported.

Noting the global momentum for high-quality halal products and services, Anwar conveyed Malaysia's readiness to share its experience and expertise in developing the halal industry.

To expand cultural cooperation, the two leaders welcomed the enhancement of cultural exchanges through literature, performing arts, cultural training, education and

other initiatives aimed at increasing public awareness of the cultures and histories of Malaysia and the Maldives.

Muizzu also expressed his appreciation for Malaysia's cooperation and friendship, which have benefited Maldivians who travel to Malaysia for tourism, education and medical purposes.

Both leaders discussed ways to further enhance cooperation to support the welfare of their citizens.

This marks the president's inaugural visit to Malaysia since assuming office on Nov 17, 2023, and underscores the two countries' efforts to reinforce longstanding diplomatic relations established in 1968.

At a bilateral meeting earlier yesterday, the leaders discussed Malaysia-Maldives ties and exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual concern.

Muizzu also extended an invitation to Anwar to undertake an official visit to the Maldives at a mutually convenient date, reaffirming his commitment to strengthening the close ties between the two nations.

In 2024, Malaysia's total trade with the Maldives increased by 4.3% to RM862.7mil from RM827.3mil in 2023, making the archi-



**Great partnership:** Anwar holding a joint press conference with Muizzu at Perdana Putra Complex in Putrajaya. — Bernama

pelagic state Malaysia's sixth largest trading partner among South Asian countries.

In education, Anwar said Malaysia's collaboration with the Maldives, which includes the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme, is now expanding to include Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Anwar also expressed Malaysia's full support for Muizzu, who has been vocally urging the international community to prioritise environmental protection.

Meanwhile, Anwar expressed his satisfaction with the meetings with Muizzu and bilateral discussions with ministers.

"We have a large number of ministers, both from the Maldives and Malaysia; that shows the importance we place on our friendly neighbour, which is, although quite a distance, a beautiful country," he said.

Earlier, Anwar and Muizzu witnessed the exchange of three memoranda of understanding and two Exchanges of Notes

covering various sectors to strengthen cooperation for mutual benefit.

The two nations also aim to expand cooperation into new areas such as floating solar, defence and digital technology.

Noting that both countries are maritime nations, Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said the potential for collaboration is vast and continues to grow across multiple sectors based on mutual benefit, adding that existing collaborations already cover areas like education, tourism, sports and health.

"There are now new areas where we need to collaborate further, including floating solar, defence and digital technology," he said in a joint press conference with Muizzu.