

12th ANNUAL LEADERS' RETREAT

PROGRESS IN AIR, SEA, POWER ISSUES

Malaysia-Singapore cooperation in unique and unprecedented phase, says Anwar

JASSMINE SHADIQE
SINGAPORE
jashadiqe@nst.com.my

MALAYSIA and Singapore have made significant progress on long-standing

airspace, energy and maritime bilateral issues.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Malaysia and Singapore had entered a unique and unprecedented phase of cooperation, supported by sustained engagement between ministers, deputy prime ministers and state leaders.

Calling the meetings with Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong during the 12th Annual Leaders' Retreat as very substantive despite a tight schedule, Anwar said discussions were candid and cordial.

He added that Wong had consistently made it a point, even at multilateral forums, to update him on progress on issues affecting both countries.

"We moved forward on several long-standing bilateral issues today, and made clear progress in

airspace, energy cooperation and maritime talks," he told journalists after the retreat.

He said discussions had advanced on the management of air traffic over southern Johor, which had been handled by Singapore since the 1940s.

This Flight Information Region (FIR) has been reaffirmed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. FIR is the airspace managed by a country and does not determine sovereignty.

Malaysia has sought to regain control of this airspace but Singapore cites aviation safety and efficient management of the heavy traffic in and out of its airports in Changi and Seletar for maintaining the status quo.

Both countries have held negotiations since 2018 to update FIR boundaries, smooth air traffic flows and ensure any revised system meets international standards.

Anwar said both nations agreed that any future arrangement must ensure smooth and unhindered air-traffic flows.

"This would balance Singapore's access to Changi and Se-



The runway of Singapore's Seletar Airport as seen from Johor Port in Pasir Gudang, Johor, in 2019. NSTP FILE PIC

letar with Malaysia's rising routes to Sabah and Sarawak. Technical teams will now work out the specific flight sectors."

Anwar, however, did not elaborate on the details of the airspace talks.

"Maritime issues, including matters linked to Batu Puteh, Middle Rock and nearby waters, remained complex," he said.

Anwar said both sides aimed for an amicable settlement and to show progress, even if only partial.

On energy, Anwar said Malaysia and Singapore had clearer pathways for cross-border flows of surplus power generated in Sarawak.

Agencies have been told to speed up the next steps.

Economic ties continued to strengthen, said Anwar, describ-

ing the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone as a "spectacular" example of trust-driven cooperation.

He added that people-to-people cooperation remained important.

Singapore's volunteer English-teaching programme in Malaysia has received strong response and could be expanded.

Anwar was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail and Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan.

Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Openg and Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi were also present.