

ENHANCING MALAYSIA, UK TIES

Anwar's first visit at the invitation of his British counterpart Starmer bodes well, says UK envoy



ZAHARAH OTHMAN

LONDON

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will undertake a five-day working visit to the United Kingdom (UK) beginning today at the invitation of his British counterpart, Keir Starmer.

This marks Anwar's first visit to the UK since his swearing-in on Nov 24, 2022, and his inaugural visit to a European nation since Malaysia became the Asean chair.

Malaysian High Commissioner to the UK Datuk Zakri Jaafar said Anwar's visit was expected to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two nations, with the UK being Malaysia's third-largest trading partner in Europe.

"This visit will breathe new life into Malaysia-UK bilateral relations under the leadership of Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

"(It) will be fully utilised to explore new initiatives in the trade and investment sectors following the UK's participation in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)," he told reporters at the high commission in Belgrave Square.

At the Asean level, Zakri noted that Malaysia, as chair for 2025, aims to utilise such visits to outline the focus and direction of its leadership under the theme "Inclusion and Sustainability".

The prime minister's schedule will commence with a meeting with Starmer at 10 Downing Street today.

According to Zakri, discussions between the two leaders will encompass bilateral cooperation in



Big Ben at the Elizabeth Tower is a British cultural icon in London. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's visit to the United Kingdom today is also his inaugural visit to a European nation as Malaysia helms the Asean chair this year. BERNAMA PIC

areas such as trade, investment, higher education, agricommodities, renewable energy and environmental sustainability.

Defence, digital technology, cultural exchanges, education, and tourism will also feature prominently in their dialogue.

Regional and international issues, including the Asean chairmanship, the Middle East situation and developments in Myanmar are also expected to be addressed.

According to Zakri, the government led by Starmer has suspended the sale of some weapons to Israel and has requested accelerated humanitarian aid to Gaza and the West Bank.

During this visit, both parties will witness the exchange of a memorandum of understanding involving the Joint Economic Trade Committee and Other Supporting Mechanism (MUKJETCO) between the Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), UK.

Anwar will be accompanied by Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz, High-

er Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir and Plantation and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani.

Tomorrow, Anwar will be engaging key UK industrial leaders in a roundtable meeting involving 40 local companies and hold private discussions with select firms to attract foreign direct investment to Malaysia.

Additionally, he will participate in the Invest Malaysia programme hosted by Bursa Malaysia, a solar farm project launch by Tenaga Nasional Bhd and a product launch by YTL Group UK, among other activities.

These initiatives aim to showcase Malaysia's economic capabilities under the Madani Economic Framework.

A visit to Battersea Power Station, Malaysia's largest public investment in Europe, is also on the agenda.

On Friday, the prime minister will deliver a lecture titled "The Adaptive Edge: Malaysia's Global Strategy in an Uncertain Era" at the London School of Economics (LSE), where he will also inaugurate the Malaysian Auditorium.

The auditorium honours efforts by the alumni of LSE's Malaysian branch, who actively contribute to community affairs in both nations.

Anwar is also scheduled to meet British House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle, and participate in an interview with Alec Russell of the *Financial Times*.

Topics to be covered include Asean leadership, Malaysia-UK relations, trade and investment, and global issues.

He will perform Friday prayers at the East London Mosque, where he will meet the local Muslim community and donate an English-translated Quran published by Nasyrul Quran in Putrajaya.

Later, Anwar will host a gathering of approximately 700 members of the Malaysian diaspora in the UK at the Royal Lancaster Hotel.

The prime minister will conclude his visit to the UK and depart for Brussels on Sunday.

Zakri said up to November last year, total trade between Malaysia and the UK stood at RM15.30 billion.

However, Malaysia's exports to the UK had declined by 4.1 per cent to RM7.83 billion, while imports dropped by 3.4 per cent to RM7.47 billion.

Despite this, the country still maintains a favourable trade balance of RM225.3 million.

Among Asean countries, Malaysia is the UK's fourth-largest trading partner after Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand.



Datuk Zakri Jaafar