

# US open to considering concerns over 25% import tariff: PM

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said US President Donald Trump has acknowledged Malaysia's role as a key regional trading partner and is open to considering its concerns over the planned 25% import tariff.

Anwar said the message was conveyed by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio during their meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, with less than a month left to resolve the matter before the tariffs take effect on Aug 1.

"Rubio's visit was useful. We raised the issue of the tariffs imposed by President Trump. He said the letter was general in tone, but there is still time for negotiation," Anwar said after the meeting.

Anwar and Rubio also discussed regional stability and the role of Asean, with the former stressing that conflicts abroad, especially acts of aggression, have direct implications for Malaysia and its neighbours.

"The US still values its ties with Malaysia and wants to maintain, even strengthen, cooperation with Asean. They also understand our position. We want friendly relations and trade with all countries.

"Many assume we must pick sides. But while the US is a key trading partner, we'll continue deepening ties with China, Asean and others to safeguard Malaysian interests.

"Unilateral tariffs will hurt not just Malaysia, but the region's economy too."

Anwar said Malaysia would continue working with the US but would firmly defend its position in



Anwar meeting Rubio at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday. - AFP PIC

any talks.

The leaders also spoke on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, with Anwar reaffirming Malaysia's stance that atrocities must stop. Rubio said Washington was working towards a ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza and Palestine.

Rubio is currently on his first official visit to Asia as America's top diplomat.

On April 2, Trump announced sweeping import tariffs on several countries, including a 24% duty on Malaysian goods. That rate was temporarily paused for 90 days and

on July 7, the White House said Malaysia's rate would be 25% starting Aug 1.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz said Malaysia remains optimistic that the remaining weeks would allow room

for a fair resolution.

"The US still wants to engage, and that's why we're staying the course."

Malaysia and the US also strengthened their strategic ties with the signing of an MoU on civil nuclear cooperation.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan hailed the MoU as a "significant milestone" in bilateral relations, particularly in energy security and sustainable development.

"This MoU is a key step in deepening the Malaysia-US comprehensive partnership," he said at the signing held on the sidelines of the 58th Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Thursday.

He added that Malaysia views nuclear energy as part of its long-term energy security strategy and is ready to pursue it in a safe, responsible and transparent manner.

In Rubio's presence, Mohamad also announced Malaysia's readiness to begin talks on the 123 Agreement - a legal framework required for US nuclear cooperation involving sensitive materials or technology.

Rubio welcomed the MoU, calling it a model for trusted civil nuclear partnerships that upholds the highest safety and non-proliferation standards.

"Many countries are expressing interest in nuclear energy. This shows how it can be done right, and we're proud to do it with a close partner like Malaysia."

Rubio reaffirmed Washington's commitment to advancing 123 Agreement negotiations with Malaysia, describing it as a natural next step in a partnership with "a bright future."