

PM GETS GUARD OF HONOUR IN MOSCOW

Gesture marks a significant moment in Malaysia-Russia relations, says envoy



**MUHAMMED
AHMAD
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MOSCOW

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour upon his arrival in Moscow on Monday, the first such reception for a Malaysian prime minister in nearly 20 years.

Malaysia's ambassador to Russia Datuk Cheong Loon Lai said the gesture marks a significant moment in Malaysia-Russia relations, with the last similar honour extended to the late Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in June 2007.

Abdullah made his official visit as the fifth prime minister to Moscow, also under Putin's leadership.

"This evening's welcome with the guard of honour signifies the importance Russia places on this visit and on Malaysia as a strate-

gic partner," Cheong said at a press conference ahead of Anwar's arrival on Monday.

Anwar was scheduled to arrive at the Vnukovo International Airport's government terminal at 6pm local time (11pm Malaysian time), flying in from the Royal Malaysian Air Force Subang Air Base.

Accompanying the prime minister on the visit are Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Chang Lih Kang, Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir and Plantation and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani.

Cheong said Anwar's four-day trip WAS categorised as an official visit, distinct from his working visit to Vladivostok in September 2024, when he attended the Eastern Economic Forum and met with Putin.

He said working visits typically involve focused engagements, such as attending conferences or bilateral meetings and may not include full ceremonial protocols.

"An official visit, on the other hand, includes formal state elements like the guard of honour and reflects a broader and deeper scope of bilateral engagement."

Cheong said Anwar's visit last

September sparked renewed momentum in Malaysia-Russia ties, culminating in Malaysia's recent inclusion as a partner country in the BRICS grouping.

"There have been exchanges between Malaysia and Russia over the years, but since the prime minister's visit in September, we've seen a marked increase in interest and political will on both sides to deepen cooperation."

Asked if the visit might raise concerns in the West, particularly the United States amid recent trade friction and geopolitical rivalry, Cheong said Malaysia's position has remained consistent.

"Malaysia is non-aligned. We have been very clear from the beginning that we will not be drawn into great power rivalries. Our relationship with Russia, as with any other country, is guided by national interest and our pursuit of economic prosperity," he said.

Anwar's itinerary in Russia includes meetings with Putin and Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, and a roundtable with Russian industry leaders.

He is also scheduled to deliver a public lecture at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and a keynote address at the 16th International Economic Forum "Russia-Islamic World: KazanForum 2025".



**Datuk Cheong Loon
Lai**