

MALAYSIA, RUSSIA EYE STRONGER TRADE TIES

Talks underway to deepen cooperation in energy sector, peaceful nuclear energy development

MOSCOW

MALAYSIA and Russia have voiced a mutual commitment to strengthening trade

and investment ties, marking a new phase in their expanding bilateral relationship.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the Kremlin yesterday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said energy remained a cornerstone of bilateral ties between the two nations. They are looking to deepen cooperation in the energy sector, with Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) continuing its strategic role in Russian oil projects.

Putin said new discussions were also underway on potential collaboration in peaceful nuclear energy development.

He said Russian energy giants such as state-controlled Rosneft Oil Co PJSC and Gazprom PJSC were actively engaging with Malaysian partners.

"The Malaysian petroleum and gas firm Petronas is Rosneft's shareholder, and Gazprom is developing partnership relations with this company," Putin said.

"We also see prospects for joint



projects in the gas sector and in peaceful nuclear development."

The relationship between Petronas and Rosneft dates back to 2006, when the national oil company acquired a 1.3 per cent stake in Rosneft during its initial public offering for US\$1.1 billion, becoming the largest minority shareholder.

The partnership was reinforced during former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's official visit to Russia in June 2007, where he described the potential deal as "a very big investment in the Russian economy".

Putin said Russian petroleum products and coal were already entering the Malaysian market in significant volumes, and cooperation continued to grow in fertilisers and synthetic rubber production.

Anwar, in turn, said Malaysia was keen to expand ties with Russia in high-technology sectors, including energy, aerospace, digital economy, artificial intelligence and agrotechnology.

Beyond energy, both leaders reaffirmed a commitment to ex-

panding bilateral trade and investment, which surpassed US\$3.2 billion last year.

They agreed to reconvene the Malaysia-Russia Intergovernmental Economic Commission in Malaysia later this year to chart further progress.

Anwar also called for the resumption of direct Aeroflot flights to Malaysia to bolster tourism, education and business links, a proposal Putin welcomed.

"We would like to request and suggest that Russian airlines, including Aeroflot, resume direct flights to Malaysia as soon as possible," Anwar said.

On the diplomatic front, Anwar reiterated Malaysia's position of non-alignment and sovereignty, saying the country would chart its own course in foreign policy based on national interest and Asean centrality.

"There are some outstanding issues due to geopolitical dictates, but we have taken a position of centrality in Malaysia and Asia to decide for ourselves what is best for Malaysia and its people."

Putin expressed appreciation for Malaysia's engagement in BRICS, pledging to support its full integration into the group's partner mechanisms.

Continued next page

Page 1 pic: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Russian President Vladimir Putin sharing a light moment at the Kremlin in Moscow.

Russian leader invited to visit Malaysia 'soon'

From Page 2

Both leaders also underscored their countries' support for international law, multilateralism and non-interference, with discussions also touching on Malaysia's role as Asean chair and regional dialogue with Russia.

Anwar concluded by inviting Putin to visit Malaysia "soon" or during the Asean Summit in October, calling it a potential breakthrough for both bilateral and regional engagement.

The press conference took a humorous turn when Putin shared an anecdote about Anwar's witty response during a private tour of the Kremlin.

While showing Anwar the grand St Andrew's Hall, Putin pointed out three thrones, meant for the tsar, the tsarina and a third, unlabelled seat.

He asked Anwar whom he thought the third was for.

Without a missing beat, Anwar replied, "For the second wife."

The remark drew laughter from a hall packed with Malaysian

ministers, senior Russian officials and members of the international press.

Anwar later clarified with a smile, "I only have one wife, Mr President. But I felt it was a trick, a test. I said the right throne was for the wife, the left for the second wife. But later I realised it was actually for the mother."

In 2024, Russia was Malaysia's ninth-largest trading partner among European nations, with total trade reaching RM11.46 billion. Malaysia's major exports to Russia include electrical and

electronic products, machinery, equipment and parts, and processed food.

Bernama reported that Anwar is expected to deliver a public lecture at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations University yesterday (MGIMO), titled "Asean in a Multipolar World: Perspectives from Malaysia".

After the lecture, Anwar is scheduled to receive an honorary doctorate from MGIMO in recognition of his contributions to global peace and strengthening international cooperation.