

PM'S VISITS TO DEEPEN TIES IN AFRICA

Trips to Addis Ababa, Johannesburg and Nairobi signal govt's commitment to African continent

ADDIS ABABA

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will head to the African continent for a series of whirlwind official and working visits to Ethiopia, South Africa and Kenya, beginning today.

He will start the trip with a stop in Addis Ababa, the capital of one of the oldest nations on the globe known not only as the birthplace of coffee, but also for its rich history and unique cultural traditions.

Living up to its status as the seat of the African Union (AU), Ethiopia's economy is one of the largest in Africa, driven by strong performance in the services sector, while agriculture remains crucial for livelihoods and exports.

Anwar's visit will mark the first time a serving Malaysian prime minister sets foot on Ethiopian soil.



SHARANJIT SINGH

Mohd Afandi Abu Bakar, charge d'affaires at the Malaysian embassy here, said Anwar was making the trip at the invitation of Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed Ali, who had visited Kuala Lumpur in October last year.

At the time, the leaders pledged to strengthen ties and collaborate on trade, agriculture, industry and mining. During that visit, Malaysia also expressed appreciation for Ethiopia's support in its bid to become a BRICS partner country.

"This is going to be a historic and meaningful meeting that will open the doors for closer bilateral ties and discussions on economic and investment matters.

"Both leaders will engage in meetings and witness the exchange of memoranda of understanding in various sectors, including tourism and health," said

Afandi, adding that Anwar was also expected to pay a courtesy call on Ethiopian President Taye Atske-Selassie Amde.

Afandi said the prime minister's visit to Ethiopia was a strategic declaration marking the full, high-level return of Malaysian diplomacy to the continent.

Anwar's visit, paired with the recent reopening of the Malaysian embassy here on Sept 23, is seen as a tangible diplomatic move.

The last time Malaysia had an embassy operating in Ethiopia was between 1965 and 1983. It was closed due to internal turmoil after the country was hit by famine.

After shutting its doors for 42 years, the reopening of the embassy is a significant development as it is intended to become a catalyst for exploring new opportunities and expanding Malaysia's diplomatic reach in Africa.

Ethiopia is one of Malaysia's major trade partners in Africa. In 2023, the total value of bilateral trade was RM446.8 million, with the balance in Malaysia's favour.

Key exports to Ethiopia include electrical and electronic products, palm oil and chemical products.

Malaysian companies have also invested in various sectors in

Ethiopia, including oil exploration by Petronas and edible oil production.

After his stopover here, Anwar will head to Johannesburg on Thursday for the G20 Leaders Summit, attending as Asean chair for 2025. He will then head to Nairobi on Sunday and then return home on Nov 24.

Anwar's trip to the three countries is designed to revitalise the Malaysia-Africa partnership, signalling Putrajaya's strategic commitment to the African continent, which is seen as a dynamic and indispensable partner with a shared history of developmental hardships and common aspirations.

The prime minister's engagements in Addis Ababa, Johannesburg and Nairobi will be anchored by three unifying strategic pillars — advancing the global south agenda, forging equitable economic resilience and deepening historical and people to people ties.

A readout from Putrajaya said Anwar aimed to consolidate Malaysia's position as a robust voice for the developing world, with key priorities to include advocating for inclusive global economic governance, pushing for debt sustainability for low-in-

come countries and addressing climate justice.

On the economic front, Malaysia seeks to expand trade and investment on the basis of genuine partnership and mutual respect, focusing on value-added collaboration.

This includes leveraging Malaysia's expertise to support African entrepreneurship and small and medium enterprise growth, facilitating halal industry development and promoting strategic market access, while positioning Malaysia as a gateway to Asean, and African nations as gateways to the continent.

The tour also celebrates profound historical linkages, notably the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations with both Ethiopia and Kenya, and the shared history of cooperation with South Africa in its fight against apartheid.

These anniversaries serve as a platform to renew diplomatic commitments and deepen cooperation across vital sectors like education, health and human capital development.

"The overall objective is to ensure that the relationship remains warm, resilient, and responsive to the needs of the people," said Afandi.