

# Malaysia eyes Africa trade boom

## Historic agreements inked to boost investment and cooperation

**NAIROBI:** After years of lull, Malaysia wants to renew its ties with the African continent, banking on its decades-old relations to tap into new potentials in trade, investment and bilateral relations.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's trip to Ethiopia, South Africa and Kenya has paved the way for stronger ties and cooperation, not just in these countries, but also in Greater Africa.

Anwar is the first Malaysian Prime Minister to visit Ethiopia.

His visit to Kenya marks the first by a Malaysian leader since 2007, when then-prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi went.

With Ethiopia and Kenya, Malaysia signed several memoranda of understanding.

One that particularly stood out is the agreement on air services.

This agreement is seen as one that will open doors to many potentials - tourism, people-to-people and certainly trade.

Acknowledging that Malaysia had better relations with Africa back in the 1980s and 1990s, and that things have slowed in terms

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of foreign policy and activities, Anwar is determined to see this change.

He wants to see Malaysia and African countries form cooperation that will be economically beneficial to each other.

Not only that, he wants Malaysia to be the "bridge" between the African continent and Asean, of which both regions can benefit from strong relations.

There are 54 countries on the African continent. Just imagine the potential.

"Wisma Putra is embarking on a more aggressive programme to enhance trade and investments with African countries.

"There is so much potential here and if we can work together, it will be mutually beneficial for our people.

"I am thrilled with the response, enthusiasm and respect that they

**Home sweet home:** Anwar arriving at the Bunga Raya Complex at Kuala Lumpur International Airport following his Africa trip. — Photo courtesy of the Prime Minister's Office's Facebook page



have for Malaysia," he told reporters at the end of his week-long trip.

Citing an example, Anwar said Kenya imports about RM1bil worth of palm oil every year and channels it to neighbouring countries.

"With the same approach, we can expand (carmaker) Proton's market and that of other products using the same approach," he said.

He added that Malaysia's semiconductor industry, digital, energy transition and education sectors attracted the countries he visited.

He said several cooperation

and agreements were signed during his trip, which will be brought to the Cabinet on Friday to ensure follow-up actions on these huge potentials.

Anwar said the Foreign Ministry and the Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry must see to it that decisions made from such trips are executed and enforced.

"It will be a major loss if we don't fully take advantage of this very friendly and supportive spirit from our friends in Africa," he added.

On the removal of tariffs on beef imported from Kenya, Anwar said this was aimed at reducing

the cost for consumers.

He said the financial impact was minimal.

"The issue here is not about removing the tariff, but to ensure the price of beef is reasonable for consumers," he said.

Malaysia, said Anwar, must ensure a balance between protecting local farmers and the need to ensure affordable food prices, noting that the country is already importing beef from several countries.

At a joint press conference, Kenyan President William Ruto said Malaysia had agreed to eliminate tariffs on Kenya's agricultural produce and beef.