

**MALAYSIA READY TO COOPERATE WITH AFGHANISTAN – PM ANWAR
DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM
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Malaysia is ready to cooperate and even improve ties with Afghanistan, a country under Taliban administration that the United Nations early this month described as the most repressive country in the world for women's and girls' rights.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Malaysia's position had been conveyed to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is ready to assist in terms of Malaysia's relationship with the Afghan government.

He said, however, Malaysia stood firm on the issue of women's education and is of the opinion that the right of the group to education cannot be denied.

"The problem now is their attitude towards women's education, whether they want to build a university specifically for women or a special women's school, it's their choice, but they cannot deny women's right to education," he told a media conference.

Earlier, Anwar received a courtesy call from OIC secretary-general Hissein Brahim Taha and the OIC delegation after performing the umrah in Mekah.

Anwar, who is accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Zambry Abdul Kadir and Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil arrived at the King Abdulaziz International Airport at 6.40 am local time to start his three-day official visit to the kingdom.

The international media, among others, had previously reported that the Afghan government prevents girls from obtaining education beyond the sixth grade and women from public spaces like parks and gymnasiums.

However, on Friday (March 17), acting foreign minister of Afghanistan Amir Khan Muttaqi was reported to have said that girls will be allowed to return to schools as soon as internal issues in the country are resolved.

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