

**ASEAN-GCC: FRAMEWORK OF COOPERATION HISTORIC, BENEFITS BOTH
BLOCS – PM ANWAR
DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM
NEWS
20 OCTOBER 2023**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 22 (Bernama) — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has described the adoption of the Framework of Cooperation 2024-2028 between the ASEAN and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) blocs as historic.

“This is historic in the sense that the GCC and ASEAN are two small regional groups that are economically very vibrant, and we are entering this collaboration without the influence of the big powers,” he said in an interview with Arab News, on the sidelines of the ASEAN-GCC Summit in Riyadh on Friday.

According to Anwar, the strategic cooperation had been in discussion for years, until Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman decided to host it, with the former coordinating on behalf of ASEAN.

“We settled on a few parameters on how to further enhance the issue of trade and mechanisms to foster investment trade,” he said.

Touching on the bilateral ties and collaboration between Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, Anwar described the link and level of trust between Saudi Arabia and Malaysia as ‘quite unique’, and hoped to further strengthen the collaboration.

Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, said although some major companies from Malaysia and Saudi Arabia were already collaborating, with a focus on

infrastructure projects including green energy and information and technology (IT), the two countries could explore more specific areas.

“I think that’s generally why meetings such as these are important. That’s why it’s not just the foreign minister, but also the Investment, Trade and Industry Minister is here because they will have to follow up on the specific areas that we can explore,” he said.

With Saudi Arabia now shifting toward a modern state with technology, a vibrant economy and renewable energy, Anwar said it was an attractive opportunity for Malaysia and the ASEAN region to explore.

“We in Asia have a long tradition of industrial investment. Malaysia, for example, has gone from being the warehouse of industry to the front end of microchips and is leading in that area. So this sort of collaboration will be useful,” he added.

In another interview with Arabic international daily Asharq Al-Awsat, Anwar said he held great expectations for the outcomes of the summit, believing it would strengthen economic ties between the GCC and ASEAN.

Anwar also stressed that bilateral cooperation between Malaysia and Saudi Arabia needed to be maintained, as many Malaysian companies were currently participating in some major projects in Riyadh and special economic zone NEOM, in various fields.

“The Kingdom, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has now moved up development investments in an amazing way.

“So, Malaysia, as you know, needs to maintain this bilateral cooperation,” he said, adding that Malaysia was also willing to sign new partnerships with the Kingdom in different fields, including green technology.

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Source: <https://www.pmo.gov.my/2023/10/978022/>