

**MALAYSIAN PM ANWAR ARRIVES IN RIYADH FOR INAUGURAL ASEAN-GCC
SUMMIT
DATO' SERI ANWAR BIN IBRAHIM
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RIYADH, Oct 19 (Bernama) — Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim arrived here Thursday to attend the inaugural ASEAN-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit.

The aircraft carrying the prime minister landed at the King Khalid International Airport, located about 35 kilometres north of Riyadh, at 8.15 pm (1.15 am, Oct 20 Malaysian time).

Anwar and other members of the Malaysian delegation were received by Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir, Malaysian Foreign Ministry Deputy Secretary-General (Bilateral Affairs) Datuk Norman Muhamad and Malaysian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Datuk Wan Zaidi Wan Abdullah.

Riyadh will host the ASEAN-GCC Summit on Friday at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, and Anwar is scheduled to deliver a speech that will highlight the current Israel-Palestine conflict.

Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh of Vietnam have arrived for the summit.

The GCC is a political and economic alliance formed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait.

ASEAN and GCC established relations in 1990 when the Gulf bloc expressed interest in establishing formal ties with its Southeast Asian counterpart.

The two blocs held their first ministerial meeting in 2009. All individual GCC nations have also acceded to ASEAN's non-aggression pact, namely the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC).

Malaysia is the ASEAN coordinator for the summit, which is aimed at optimising cooperation between the two regional organisations.

The summit is expected to deliberate on the Israel-Palestine conflict as well as find ways to end the suffering of the people of Gaza following the latest Zionist military action.

The discussion aligns with Malaysia's firm stance and Anwar's vocal support for Palestine following Israel's increased oppression against the Palestinians, including the recent attacks and clashes in the Gaza Strip.

The summit is also expected to discuss the current and future direction of ASEAN-GCC relations in line with ASEAN's desire to broaden its ties with countries in West Asia, including in economic and energy cooperation.

During his two-day working visit here, Anwar is scheduled to hold discussions with Saudi Aramco and the Public Investment Fund prior to a meeting with Malaysian nationals living and working in Riyadh.

The prime minister is also scheduled to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Saturday to further discuss the Palestinian issue and bilateral relations.

Saudi Arabia is Malaysia's largest trading partner among the West Asian countries, with US\$10.26 billion in total bilateral trade recorded between the two countries in 2022, an increase of 159.2 per cent from 2021.

Among the prominent projects the kingdom has in Malaysia is the Pengerang Integrated Complex in Johor, through Saudi Aramco.

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