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Malaysia-China

CHINA IS PREPARED TO WORK WITH M'SIA TO OVERCOME ECONOMIC CRISIS

BEIJING, May 7 (Bernama) -- China is prepared to explore and work out ways with Malaysia on how to overcome the Malaysian economic crisis, a Chinese official said today.

Wang Yi, the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs said although the economic woes of Malaysia were not as bad as those of Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea, China was prepared to make contacts at all levels to explore ways on how China could assist Malaysia to overcome the problems.

"All in all, China is ready to hear from Malaysia its desire, request and will," he said, noting that the upcoming visit of Malaysian Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik would provide a good opportunity to discuss matters of common concern and areas of cooperation and coordination.

Wang, who was promoted to his present post earlier this week, was speaking in a special interview with Bernama Chairman Prof Datuk Abu Bakar Hamid at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, here.

Also present were Bernama's editor for feature and foreign news Kuah Guan Oo and Haji Muhammad Ridwan, the Malaysian national news agency's editor for corporate news.

Wang said unlike Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea where China had specific programmes to assist these countries, there had been no such specific request from Malaysia.

Wang pointed out that China, in sending two missions to the troubled Southeast Asian countries, also included Malaysia although the country was not badly affected by the crisis as its Thai and Indonesian neighbours.

He however cautioned that China's ability was limited as it was also a developing country with its own domestic problems.

Reiterating that China would not devalue its renminbi while keeping its growth rate at eight per cent of Gross Domestic Product, he said at present "all we can hope for is that the financial situation in Japan should not deteriorate because it could spark off another new round of financial crisis in the whole region."

"The key issue here is Japan should first tackle its own problem," he said when asked on Japan's leadership role in helping to resolve the economic turmoil of the region.

He said China also shared the feeling of disappointment of other Southeast Asian countries over the role of Japan in the region. "Japan should play a better role in helping to overcome the economic problem of the region because most of the debts of these countries are owed to Japan."

He agreed with the view that although Japan attached importance to its relations with Asean countries, "it attaches greater importance to its relations with the United States."

Asked if China was willing to play a leading role in the region, he said: "We should bear in mind that China is still a developing country and its role in the region is limited."

Wang said China would still concentrate on its own domestic development and would not change its policy for a long time. China is also opposed to hegemonism and although they had read a couple of reports about China's leadership role in the region, "I don't think they conform to the policy intention of China."

"Frankly speaking, China's intention is to cooperate with all countries in Asia and work with these countries to better develop our economies," he

said.

Wang then called on Southeast Asian countries including Malaysia to adhere to China's "One China Policy," warning that Taiwan was offering assistance in the present crisis as a "bait" for political gains.

"Recently, there is a trend by the Taiwan authorities to make use of the temporary financial and economic difficulties and to offer assistance to certain countries as a bait for political gain.

"And Taiwan authorities target Malaysia as an important country and a lot of facts have proven it," he said.

He said as a friendly neighbour of Malaysia, China hoped that Malaysia would understand the national feelings of the Chinese people for an early reunification of the Motherland and territorial integrity.

Wang also said that China was confident that Malaysia would recover from its economic problems under the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and by the unity shown by the different races.

He said China also believed that the region would emerge stronger from the crisis and still be a place of rapid growth.

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