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Beijing seeks KL's help to foster ties with Asean

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CHINA is looking to Malaysia to help it establish a link with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) so they can work together to form a new world political and economic order.

China's Assistant Foreign Minister Wang Yin said as developing nations, Asean members and China need to take part in economic globalisation, but at the same time maintain national identities.

He said as globalisation is taking place, developing countries must make an effort to establish new political and economic order.

"In this regard, Malaysia has a unique role to play to enhance the cooperation between Asean members and China," Wang told a news conference at the end of the two-day Asean-China Joint Cooperation Committee (ACJCC) meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

On why China singled out Malaysia to foster closer cooperation, Wang said:

"As far as I am concerned, Malaysia has played a very important role in safeguarding its sovereignty, its social values and also safeguarding the interest of developing nations in the regional and international affairs."

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has regularly voiced out Malaysia's views in the regional and international forum.

"On the part of China, we have many similar positions and views of Malaysia. Therefore, the two countries can enhance cooperation in the matter," he said.

The cooperation, he said is not only on the economic sphere, but also in other fields such as science and technology.

Wang said Asian nations were once seen as an economic miracle but now they are being challenged by the "knowledge economies" which have advanced development in science and technology.

China believes that Asean and China should foster closer cooperation in such areas so that they can improve their competitiveness in the market, he said.

He said Malaysia has taken the lead by constructing the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, which he sees as "the airport of the next century".

Wang also expressed his admiration towards the Multimedia Super Corridor and said China hopes that Malaysia will continue such efforts.

Meanwhile, Asean nations and China will undertake four joint projects under its US\$700,000 (US\$1 = RM3.80) Asean-China Cooperation Fund.

The projects, covering exchange programmes, economic and trade seminars, scientific gathering and seminars on Modern China, were identified during the ACJCC meeting.

Wang said the projects were the best choices for cooperation between China and Asean.

Wang said Malaysia, as coordinator, has done well in implementing past projects and in identifying new projects for the ACCJC.

"We are looking at the continuation of the exchange programme but now we want to extend the scope to include the media.

"We will also continue with economic and trade seminars but we will make it more specialised by dividing into investment and trade groups," he said.

On the Modern China programme, young participants will learn about the country by attending lectures and going on study tour in China.

Wang said this project was important for Asean members to understand the

rapid changes undergone by China.

The last project gathers scientists from both sides to exchange views and come out with pragmatic proposals as input to the coming Asean-China Science and Technology Joint Commission meeting.

On his view on the cooperation between Asean and China, Wang said he is optimistic about it because both sides have common interest in regional and international affairs.

"In economic cooperation, there is great potential for both parties.

"They are at different stages of development, each with different strong points. Thus, we can deepen the cooperation by emphasising this," he said.

Wang described the second ACJCC meeting as successful and was carried out in a cordial manner.

He said the meeting reached wide consensus on various issues of cooperation between Asean and China.

"Throughout the discussions, we reached mutual trust where Asean members understood China policies and China understood Asean's aspirations in working together with China," he said.

Asean-Malaysia director-general Datuk Syeed Sultan Seni Pakir said Asean members appreciated China's keen interest to forge closer ties.

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