

Courting China

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SUBANG: Malaysia needs to better understand China from all aspects as it is turning into a superpower.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who returned yesterday from a five-day official visit to China, said bilateral relations would be strengthened, covering various fields.

He said Malaysia should have indepth knowledge on China in terms of its political, social, cultural, economic and legal aspects. To promote understanding of the country, he announced the setting up of a China studies institute.

"We can establish ties with the Xiamen University or any other institutes offering China Studies to assist us in the setting up of the institute."

Abdullah said he visited the Xiamen University where many Malaysian students are studying, on Wednesday. The Xiamen University is a leading university in China.

"What's interesting at the university is that it has an institute of South-East Asian

studies and I noticed such institutes help boost their position because China's trade is expanding and becoming stronger in this (Asean) region."

Abdullah, who met top Chinese leaders in Beijing, said that China is not a threat to the region in terms of the economy and security but offers trade opportunities which Malaysia should take advantage.

He said that his trip was highly successful and he was happy that he could meet so many of China's leaders to exchange views with them.

He said that the visit enabled both countries to forge closer cooperation in biotechnology and information and communications technology.

Meanwhile, in his keynote address at the Malaysia-China Partnership Summit 2003 at Seri Kembangan, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Southeast Asian countries need not worry about China as the country is unlikely to indulge in any military adventure and expansionism.

He said unless China is provoked, the fear is misplaced because in today's world, military conquest is unnecessary, costly and counter-productive.

"We do not think China will indulge in military adventures. There is therefore no reason for Southeast Asia to fear China's military might," he said in his speech read out by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak.

Mahathir said the emergence of China as an economic powerhouse brings challenges and opportunities to Southeast Asian countries, which must learn to cope with both.

He also said Malaysia would keep up the close exchanges between the top leaders at various levels and deepen the mutual understanding, trust and vigorously promote cooperation with China in trade, economy, science, technology, culture and education.

Mahathir said the establishment and launch of the Malaysia-China Business Council by Abdullah in Beijing earlier this week is significant.