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Malaysia, Cuba to set up association

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People (ICAP), together with its Malaysian associates, is setting up a Malaysian-Cuban Friendship Association to strengthen relationship between the two countries.

ICAP vice-president Eva Seoane Dominguez viewed the move as the first step that could open more doors to future collaborations, but initially, the association will focus on programmes to help people of both countries get to know each other.

"Then we can look at ways to establish networks in various fields," she told a Press conference here today. Present was Cuban Ambassador to Malaysia Pedro Monzon Barata.

Dominguez said the Cuban perception of Malaysia had been positive, especially after Cuban President Fidel Castro and former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had meetings.

Unlike most Western countries, Malaysia did not hold any prejudice against Cuba, she said.

"I am confident that if nurtured accordingly, the relationship could bring huge mutual benefits," she said.

ICAP is a social organisation established on Dec 30, 1960, to educate the global community on the actual scenario in Cuba, particularly after the negative image it received during the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

The association also aims to get international support to oppose the unconditional US blockade on Cuba. ICAP has 1,806 associations in 143 countries.

Dominguez said the move to set up the Malaysian-Cuban Friendship Association had been well-received by the Malaysian Government, particularly after they met Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein earlier today.

Pending approval from the Registrar of Societies, Dominguez said the association would be run by a protem committee.