

## **China, Malaysia should enhance collaboration, tap into new growth opportunities**

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China and Malaysia should look to enhance collaboration and tap into new growth opportunities to speed up economic recovery in the post-Covid-19 period.

China's ambassador-designate to Malaysia Ouyang Yujing (above) said while continuing to advance traditional cooperation in trade, investment and tourism, the two sides should also focus on new areas of cooperation.

He said China and Malaysia could make good use of the existing mechanisms such as the China-Malaysia Strategic Consultation Mechanism, the Joint Economic and Trade Committee as well as the ongoing High-level Committee on Post-epidemic Cooperation led by both foreign ministers, to further enhance the strategic alignment and cooperation planning.

“At a time of unprecedented global changes and a once-in-a-century pandemic,

the uncertainties facing global development are increasing, posing challenges to China-Malaysia economic and trade cooperation.

“However, there always exist opportunities in a time of crisis,” he said in an exclusive interview with Bernama, his first with Malaysian media since arriving in Kuala Lumpur last December.

The ambassador-designate outlined three potential areas. The first is for Malaysia and China to strengthen cooperation on inter-connectivity and production capacity.

Projects under the framework of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) already have a good beginning, he said.

“China is speeding up to foster a new development pattern with domestic circulation as the mainstay and domestic and international circulations reinforcing each other, and further opening-up to an even higher level,” he said.

He also said both sides should seize opportunities of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement to advance bilateral cooperation on the major projects including “Two Countries, Twin Parks” and East Coast Rail Link (ECRL), infrastructure development as well as taking an active part in building

the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor.

“Our co-efforts will play a leading role in major projects, to boost the economy and improve people’s livelihood, and therefore make our two countries get ahead in the post-pandemic world economic recovery,” he said.

Ouyang also urged industry players in both countries to foster new growth points on digital economy cooperation.

He said China is leading in the world digital economy and has vast experience in this field, with some globally renowned enterprises such as Huawei, Alibaba, Tencent, and a large number of unicorn companies.

Malaysia, he noted also emphasised the digital economy with the recent launching of the MyDigital Blueprint by Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

“The pandemic has underlined the value of the digital economy. China and Malaysia can explore further cooperation areas in 5G, artificial intelligence (AI), smart city, block-chain and other digital economies, so as to optimise and upgrade our industries, promote employment rate and entrepreneurship, adding new momentum to our development.

“I also hope both sides can actively explore cooperation in areas of e-commerce, Internet economy, digital economy and other new forms of business, creating new growth points for China-Malaysia cooperation in the post-epidemic era, thus pushing our economic and trade relationship to a new level,” Ouyang said.

Ouyang also said Malaysia-China should view the pandemic as an opportunity to strengthen the medium-and -long-term cooperation in the public health sector.

“The pandemic has raised the awareness of countries around the world to work together in response to non-traditional security threats such as infectious diseases,” he said.

Ouyang added that during the process of combating the pandemic, China and Malaysia have shared with each other their experience in pandemic control and patient treatment, cooperation in vaccine research and development, and accessibility cooperation.

“China is willing to continue enhancing cooperation with Malaysia in medical treatment, vaccine development and other areas, working together to build a community of common health,” he said.

During the interview, he had also highlighted that China continues to be

Malaysia's largest trading partner for the 12th consecutive year and the largest FDI source in the manufacturing sector for five consecutive years.

"This trend has not been disrupted by the pandemic, which shows that Chinese investors have great confidence in Malaysia's economic potential and outlook.

"I look forward to seeing more Chinese companies investing in Malaysia," he said.

He said in recent years, the trade volume between China and Malaysia has grown steadily.

According to the statistics from the Chinese Embassy, bilateral trade volume between China and Malaysia totalled US\$131.16 billion (approximately RM539.3 billion) in 2020, increasing by 5.7 percent year-on-year.

China's export to Malaysia in 2020 was US\$56.43 billion (approx. RM232 billion), an increase of 8.2 percent from the previous year, while Malaysia's export to China on the same year hit US\$74.73 billion (approx. RM307.2 billion), an increase of 3.9 percent from 2019.

"These achievements have been made in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which are indeed remarkable, and have manifested the vitality and resilience of

China and Malaysia's economy and trade relationship," he said.

On another note, Ouyang said Chinese companies in Malaysia have been playing an active role in Malaysia's economic recovery and development.

Citing Alliance Steel as an example, he said the company had invested and built a steel plant in Pahang, providing employment to more than 2,000 local workers.

It exports over 2.4 million tonnes of quality steel every year, adding an export value of US\$1.3 billion to Malaysia while tripling the overall throughput of Kuantan Port and becoming an important growth engine for the local economy, he said.

Globally, Malaysia is China's ninth-largest trading partner and China's second-largest trading partner in Asean.

He said as an important hub of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Malaysia enjoys a favourable geographical location and a sound business environment.

"It is an ideal destination for investment. I believe Chinese enterprises will continue to make great achievements here," he said.

He said under China's 14th Five Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development, the republic aimed to foster a new development paradigm with domestic circulation as the mainstay and domestic and international circulations reinforcing each other.

"China will further unleash market potentials, expand and deepen opening-up, and share more development dividends with the rest of the world including Malaysia.

Likewise, he said Malaysia has been working on the 12th Five-year Plan, charting the direction of economic recovery and national revitalisation.

"China and Malaysia are natural partners whose development needs are highly compatible. I believe, with China and Malaysia working jointly in defeating the Covid-19 pandemic, the mutual benefit and pragmatic cooperation between us will usher in new progress," he said.

- Bernama

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