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Malaysia, Laos to strengthen ties in halal industry, STI

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PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia and Laos yesterday agreed to forge stronger cooperation in various areas, including the halal industry and science, technology and innovation (STI).

The Foreign Ministry said yesterday Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had suggested the two countries explore potentials in developing the halal industry to further diversify trade activities.

It said Najib proposed this to Laotian Prime Minister Dr Thongloun Sisoulith during their meeting here following the positive progress of economic cooperation between both countries.

“Thongloun is committed to ensuring ease of business for Malaysian investors in Laos, and he has invited interested Malaysian companies to invest in private healthcare services in Laos,” it said.

On STI cooperation, the two countries had inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) looking at potential areas of interest, especially biotechnology, standards development and cyber security.

The MoU signatories were Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau and his Laotian counterpart, Dr Boviengkham Vongdara.

The Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry said with the signing of the MoU, a joint committee on STI cooperation would be established to decide priority areas.

It said the MoU provided for knowledge sharing and expertise, and facilitated the growth of scientific and technological capabilities for the purpose of advancing the economies of both countries.

Malaysia and Laos would also support the participation of each country’s public and private sectors, including universities, institutions and organisations in joint collaboration projects.

On education and human resource development, the Foreign Ministry said Najib welcomed and encouraged more Laotian students and officials to apply for the Malaysian International Scholarship and the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme scholarship, and pursue their education either in public or private higher education institutions in Malaysia.

It said Najib announced that more places for scholarships for Laotian students would be made available.

Both leaders agreed to work together to combat global terrorism for the continued peace, stability and security of the Southeast Asian region.

Thongloun, accompanied by several cabinet ministers, deputy ministers and senior officials, was here on Najib’s invitation. It was his first official visit since becoming prime minister on April 20, last year.

After the meeting, Najib hosted an official luncheon in honour of the Laotian prime minister and his delegation.

Later, Thongloun delivered the opening remarks at the Malaysia-Laos business forum, and in the afternoon he had an audience with Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Muhammad V.

Thongloun’s inaugural visit to Malaysia serves as a demonstration of the unwavering commitment of both countries to propel their existing relations to a higher plane in the next decade.