

Strengthening regional integration

PM: Connectivity with S. Korea can help Asean reap its potential

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BUSAN (South Korea): Asean is blessed with vast opportunities and rich resources but the region has not been able to capitalise on its full potential due to a shortage of advanced, efficient and sustainable infrastructure, says Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Asean, he added, was looking at South Korea which possessed the required expertise in infrastructure construction, economic expansion, smart cities development and innovation to enhance the connectivity and economy of the region.

Speaking during the Plenary Session 11 at the Asean-South Korea Commemorative Summit 2019 yesterday, Dr Mahathir said it was essential to ensure greater connectivity between Asean and South Korea to ensure both parties could learn from each another.

"We are heartened by South Korea's New Southern Policy, which elevates South Korea's strategic ties with Asean.

"Therefore it is important for us to find synergies between our policies," he said.

The plenary session was also



Hand-in-hand: Dr Mahathir with Asean leaders and Moon (centre) during the Asean-Republic of Korea Memorial Summit. — Bernama

attended by South Korea's President Moon Jae-in and Asean leaders.

Dr Mahathir also emphasised the importance of connectivity, especially in facilitating the creation of a

seamless and borderless region, facilitate businesses, bypass traditional phases of technological development and capture the opportunities presented by the new economy.

Enhancing shared access to innovations and technologies also helps to achieve a competitive economy, sustainable development and high quality of life.

To achieve this, the masterplan on Asean Connectivity 2025 (MPAC2025) was integral to building the Asean community and South Korea's support for its implementation was appreciated, said the Prime Minister.

For Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said the country was pleased with the progress made in smart cities development projects that were jointly undertaken with South Korea in Kota Kinabalu, specifically in smart water management and smart new township development.

On socio-cultural corporation, Dr Mahathir proposed for the regional grouping and South Korea to develop more diverse and comprehensive programmes on arts, culture and social understanding to further strengthen people to people links.

Asean and South Korea also need to strengthen education cooperation by promoting and increasing academic exchanges as well as leveraging on existing networks and programmes such as the Asean University Network and Asean-Korea Academic Exchange Programme. — Bernama