

# Getting down to business

## Groups optimistic PM's first official visit to China will be fruitful

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**PETALING JAYA:** Business groups are hopeful for more positive bilateral trade and technology transfer between Malaysia and China in the run-up to the first official visit by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to the Middle Kingdom.

They said the Prime Minister's visit is the "most important diplomatic event" between both countries since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Besides inking more business projects at the government-to-government (G2G) and business-to-business (B2B) levels, they are hopeful for the visa requirement to be made easier for travellers to boost tourism and business visits.

Malaysia-China Business Council director Datuk Beh Hang Kong said the premier's visit to China would help to set several matters straight.

"We have experienced several changes of prime ministers in recent years, and some did not get to make any visits due to the pandemic.

"So the coming official trip is important to clear up doubt that the Prime Minister is not giving enough focus on the Malaysia-China relationship.

"His visit will strengthen existing strong bilateral ties and build on them to welcome more cooperation," he said in an interview.

Beh called on the government to expand the successful "Two Countries, Twin Parks" project to include multiple zones in the country to allow Chinese investors to shift their bases to Malaysia, especially when there is a sanction by the United States.

"The cooperation model is proven to work. China is in the midst of developing similar projects with Indonesia and the Philippines.

"It's past time we upped the game and expanded it to become the "Two

Countries, Twin Parks, Multiple Zones" project to reap more economic benefits," he added.

"Two Countries, Twin Parks" is a flagship national-level investment collaboration and a key project that is part of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The China-Malaysia Qinzhou Industrial Park in Guangxi opened in 2012, and the Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park opened a year later in Malaysia.

Beh said the "Two Countries, Twin Halal Parks" project could be viewed as Malaysia's outstanding and internationally acclaimed halal certification system that could benefit China's massive halal market.

"We can cater to halal certification for China products, as well as other Islamic markets," he said.

He also called for a less-hassle visa requirement, allowing Chinese visitors visa-on-arrival like what was practised before this.

"Right now, Malaysians can visit Hainan Island in China visa-free for a week. Perhaps we can offer Sabah

a similar visa-free requirement to Chinese tourists," he said.

Weighing in, the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia treasurer-general Datuk Koong Lin Loong said the existing visa requirement was what we lost out on compared with neighbouring countries that have also been attracting Chinese investors and visitors.

"We have what it takes to attract Chinese investors.

"But we also see that some of them have been investing in other countries."

He said Anwar's upcoming visit would bring a positive message to China that Malaysia is still a good choice for their businesses to expand in South-East Asia.

"This is our Prime Minister's first visit to China, which coincidentally also has a new administration led by its president Xi Jinping," said Koong.