

UK official warns Malaysia against an Asean union

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By Nawar Firdaws

Telling Malaysia to learn from Brexit, UK trade official says loss of independence and sovereignty would be the consequence of being in a regional grouping.

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia can learn a thing or two from Brexit, the most important of which is to avoid getting into a union like the European Union (EU) with other Asean countries.

“Keep it economic,” said UK Secretary of State for the Department of International Trade Dr Liam Fox.

He was responding to a question by International Trade and Industry Minister Mustapa Mohamed, at a forum titled “Malaysia and Britain ‘Partners in a Post-Brexit World’” held here, today.

Mustapa had asked Fox for lessons Asean could learn from the UK’s decision to leave the EU.

“Consider how you would feel if the laws of Malaysia are subjected to an Asean court based in Bangkok,” Fox said.

“Or if your trade policies are not determined by your own government, but by an Asean council.

“When you have attributed a large amount of your annual budget, pay your own taxes, and it (Malaysia’s policies) disappear from your own control.”

Fox said this loss of independence and sovereignty was what led him and others to support the Brexit movement.

“I wanted to leave the EU because I felt Britain’s horizon was being artificially restrained by the EU that was looking too inwards and too backwards.”

This was especially so at a time when the majority of the global economy came from outside Europe, he said, adding that he wanted the UK to have the ability to take up all available trade opportunities.

“Without being restricted by European law, by European foreign policy, and trading policy.

“I want the UK to be able to form partnerships... and I think some of the changes we are making in the UK are going to make us even more outward (looking) than we had been in the past.

“The UK is open for business and is committed to deepening our trading partnership with Malaysia.”

Fox also said the UK economy had been growing stronger despite the “UK economic apocalypse” many had predicted since its surprise decision to exit the EU in the Brexit referendum last year.

“If anything, UK is now a more interesting place for investors,” he told a press conference after the forum.

“Don’t read the prophets of doom. Read the proper economic papers. Succeed we will, because we have a strong economy.”

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