

M'sia supports Timor-Leste to become full Asean member

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia and Timor-Leste are focused on embarking on new collaborations, aimed not only to strengthen relations to another level, but to also exemplify the country's support for Timor-Leste to become a full member of Asean, says Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

The Deputy Prime Minister said among areas of common interest are education and research, which will deepen the ties between Malaysia and Timor-Leste.

"By fostering closer collaboration, we are laying the ground-

work for a more integrated partnership.

"Malaysia remains committed to assisting Timor-Leste in its journey towards Asean membership. We are confident that our shared efforts will lead to mutual growth and success," he said in a statement yesterday.

Timor-Leste was granted official observer status and received in-principle approval to become a member of Asean during the regional annual summit held in Cambodia in 2022.

Established in 1967, Asean is a political and economic regional grouping of 10 countries – Malaysia, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Ahmad Zahid, who is in Timor-Leste for an official visit, said that among notable agreement was for the latter to send government-sponsored students to study in Malaysia and to facilitate academic, research and training activities.

He said he had productive discussions with Timor-Leste's President Jose Ramos-Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao.

The Deputy Prime Minister also met with Vice-Prime Minister I and Coordinating Minister of Economic Affairs, Tourism and Environment Francisco Kalbuadi Lay and Vice-Prime Minister II and Coordinating Minister for Social Affairs, Rural Development and Community Housing Mariano Assanami Sabino.

"We explored key areas of cooperation, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the halal industry, rural development and town planning," he said.

He said several milestones had been achieved in the visit such as strengthening ties through higher education.

"We have agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation in higher education through Universiti Teknikal Mara (UniKL), which will award 50 scholarships to Timor-Leste students, enabling them to study in Malaysia," he said.

UniKL would serve as the key technology provider for the establishment of new polytechnics in Timor-Leste, focusing on digital

marketing, food technology and tourism management, he said, adding that it would also offer hybrid short courses in leadership, finance, management and entrepreneurship for government officials.

During the visit, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) and the Human Capital Development Fund Timor-Leste (FDCH) to facilitate an increase in Timor-Leste students pursuing higher education in Malaysia.

A MOU was also inked between Universiti Malaysia Sabah and National University of Timor-Leste to enhance cooperation in academic, research and training activities.