
Biotechnology is key driver for Cuba-Malaysia ties - Ambassador

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Cooperation in the field of biotechnology will enhance Cuba-Malaysia bilateral ties, says the Caribbean country's ambassador to Malaysia, Ibeté Fernández Hernández.

She said three Malaysian delegations from the private sector last year visited Cuba's Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, and the Finlay Institute in Havana to explore the possibility of producing vaccines in Malaysia, or at least to purchase them from Cuba.

The Finlay Institute, a prestigious scientific centre is well-known globally for developing among others, the world's first effective vaccine against both meningitis B and C.

Hernández said the Malaysian companies were in the process of signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU), adding the agreement was likely to be sealed by mid-year.

"Cuba and Malaysia should come together to identify business opportunities. The data on Cuba's success in the health sector are very clear, as well as the advancements in the biotechnology industry," she told Bernama International News Service here last night.

Hernández was met at a reception to celebrate Cuba's Independence Day, which was observed on Jan 1. This year was a significant celebration as it marked the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

The event was attended by Works Deputy Minister Mohd Anuar Mohd Tahir.

Hernández said the MoU would enable Malaysia to benefit from technology transfer, be a platform for the production of vaccines, including packaging, as well as exporting the vaccines to other countries.

Cuba, she said, was ready to share its expertise in the biotechnology industry following its ability to produce among

others, unique drugs to prevent amputations due to diabetes, and vaccines to improve the quality of life of patients afflicted with cancer.

Besides biotechnology, the ambassador said environmental cooperation would also be the highlight given that Cuba, an island country in the Caribbean, had vast expertise and experience in the fisheries and marine conservation.

Hernandez said to further strengthen bilateral relations, Cuba would like to acquire palm oil from Malaysia, adding that although in Cuba the commodity was mainly used in the toiletry industry, it could also be promoted for cooking and food industries.

The ambassador also said that despite notable challenges, newly-minted President Miguel Diaz-Canel and the government were committed to building a more socialist democratic, prosperous and sustainable society.

This would be proven on Feb 24 when referendum for the new constitution took effect, she said.

On Cuba's National Day, Hernandez said advancements, mistakes and rectification had been together in the revolutionary process all these years, adding that it was the reason why Cubans were able to survive when none thought the nation would be able to stand alone in the decade of the 1990s.

For Cuba, the path to the current day had not been easy, said the ambassador.

"In the six decades, Cuba has not had a minute of quietness, it has suffered all kinds of attacks, (ranging) from aggressions, threats and sabotages, just because the country dared to make a revolution and defend it," she added.

Hernandez pointed out that Cuba's economy was losing some US\$12 million daily due to the United States blockade imposed since 1960.
