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## ASEAN–China Partnership Deepens Cooperation Across Trade, Energy, Technology



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ASEAN and China have sustained strong cooperation momentum across economic, energy, digital, and people-to-people sectors despite a complex global environment, ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn said in an interview, underscoring the partnership's contribution to regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

Kao said cooperation continues to advance under the ASEAN–China Comprehensive Strategic

Partnership, supported by the newly adopted Plan of Action for 2026–2030, which will guide collaboration in the coming years. A key milestone was the successful signing of the ASEAN–China Free Trade Area (FTA) 3.0 Upgrade Protocol, described as a significant achievement that elevates economic cooperation to a new level.

The upgraded FTA is expected to have far-reaching impacts, particularly by expanding cooperation in digital trade, digital services, digital payments, and e-commerce. ASEAN and China remain among each other's most important trading partners, with trade volumes continuing to grow. Kao expressed optimism that momentum in trade and investment will be maintained under both the upgraded FTA and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Energy cooperation has emerged as a top priority for ASEAN, with China increasing investment in the region's energy sector, especially in renewable energy and electric vehicle production. This cooperation is expected to support energy transitions and broaden access to EVs across ASEAN member states.

Looking ahead, Kao noted that while no single sector defines ASEAN–China relations, emerging areas such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, and new technologies will increasingly shape future cooperation. On political and security issues, he reaffirmed ASEAN's consistent

approach toward China, emphasizing dialogue, respect for sovereignty, and commitment to regional stability.

Highlighting deep people-to-people ties, Kao said long-standing exchanges in tourism, education, and employment form the foundation of the partnership, which he said should continue to be defined by trust, peace, and shared prosperity.