

Prospects for Closer Ties between ASEAN and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)



ASEAN Studies Centre Head Mr Rodolfo Severino shared his perspective on ASEAN-GCC cooperation, highlighting the timeliness of the two regions' move towards closer ties and cooperation. Agreeing with ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan's observation that lack of awareness was the main obstacle for the underexploited potential of cooperation between the two, Mr Severino observed that the move to establish closer ties would benefit both ASEAN and the GCC. ASEAN is at the core of economic integration and consultative mechanisms in East Asia, and would serve as a vital link for GCC in the East Asian region. ASEAN countries would also benefit from the economic links with GCC countries, especially in areas such as energy. ASEAN could also learn from the GCC on tackling transboundary issues and removing barriers to trade.

Overcoming the lack of awareness is also important in realising the ASEAN-GCC free trade agreement. The FTA is also a statement of intent to have stronger relations, focusing on the potential and opportunities that each has to offer. The Singapore-GCC FTA - concluded in 2008 - could also offer some lessons for cooperation with GCC at the broader regional level.



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