BEIJING: A professor at the Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) is confident that Bahasa Melayu, which is spoken by more than 300 million people, has its own strengths to become an important international language of communication.

Director of the Chinese-Malay Studies Centre at BFSU, Professor Dr Wu Zong Yu, said in the economic, political and social context, Bahasa Melayu would become more important, particularly in the Asian region, with the completion of the proposed Asean railway project from Nanjing in China to Singapore.

"With that, I believe more people will be using Bahasa Melayu as a language of communication," he said yesterday.

Earlier, Wu, together with the holder of the BFSU Bahasa Melayu Centre chair, Professor Dr Mohd Taib Dora, welcomed the arrival of the Raja Muda of Perlis Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Jamalullail, who is also Universiti Malaysia Perlis chancellor. The Raja Muda was visiting Malaysian students studying at BFSU. Also present was the Malaysian ambassador to China, Datuk Iskandar Sarudin.

Syed Faizuddin, who is commander of Regiment 504 of the Territorial Army based in Bukit Keteri Camp, Perlis, was heading a delegation on an academic and strategic military working visit to military camps and universities in Beijing.

According to Wu, the number of Bahasa Melayu speakers was on the rise since the Chinese government decided to place emphasis on the language by establishing the Malay Studies Department at 10 universities in 1961.

He said BFSU had increased the intake of Chinese students for Bahasa Melayu studies from 15 to 24 this year, adding that the intake was done every two years.

Wu said there were 200 Malaysian students studying for their degree in the Chinese language at BFSU.

Syed Faizuddin, in his speech, called on Malaysian students in China to be grateful, open-minded and to mingle with other international students and the local community.

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