

Asean should prepare for public health emergencies



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During the Summits yesterday, issues were raised on Covid-19 particularly on the importance of safe and effective vaccines that are accessible for all

by S BIRRUNTHA / pic by TMR FILE

MALAYSIA has urged Asean and its dialogue partners to prepare for public health emergencies and emerging diseases through exchange of knowledge and capacity-building programmes, including by leveraging on digital technologies.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah (*picture*) said Malaysia reiterates its commitment to Asean and for member states to remain united in facing the Covid-19 pandemic and other emerging challenges in the region.

He said during the Summits which concluded yesterday, the country had consistently raised issues related to Covid-19 pandemic, in particular to the importance of equitable, fair, safe and effective vaccines that are accessible for all.

“The prime minister highlighted the importance of greater collaboration with external partners on health diplomacy including that of expanding public health capacity cooperation and collaboration.

“This includes the development of vaccines via access to relevant technology and knowledge,” he said at the 38th and 39th Asean Summits and Related Summits press conference.

Malaysia, he said, also extended its appreciation to Asean’s dialogue partners’ close cooperation and the assistance extended to Asean member states in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said the Prime Minister had highlighted that a holistic recovery from Covid-19 requires cooperation in multi-disciplinary areas of health and relevant socio-economic fields.

This includes the importance of the post Covid-19 recovery efforts including the Asean Comprehensive Recovery Framework, the early operationalisation of the Asean Travel Corridor Arrangement Framework.

Additionally, Saifuddin said Malaysia also welcomed the cooperation between Asean and its dialogue partners in the area of mental health during the Summits.

“Given the impact of the pandemic where nationalism and geopolitics rivalry have shaped the response of governments and international organisations, Malaysia urged world leaders to relook at the existing international order and hoped that a new course forward in preparation for the next pandemic could be charted.

“Malaysia felt that a new global health security architecture needs to be developed. It is evident that the pandemic has strengthened the case for multilateralism,” he noted.

Meanwhile, on the digital economy, Saifuddin said Malaysia had emphasised the need to advance digital transformation and bridge the digital divide in the region in the pursuit of socio-economic recovery and prosperity in the region.

Malaysia also called for the consolidated strategy on the Fourth Industrial Revolution for Asean and Asean Digital Masterplan, adopted by the Summit, to be swiftly translated into concrete deliverables.

Additionally, Saifuddin said Malaysia also welcomed cooperation between Asean and its dialogue partners to strengthen cooperation in digital transformation which would help to reinvigorate Asean economies.