

BILATERAL TIES

'SANCTIONS BY SUPERPOWERS UNFAIR'

They're hurting smaller Asean nations' trade and growth, says PM

PHNOM PENH

PRIME Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has criticised world superpowers for imposing sanctions on smaller countries in the region.

Describing the sanctions as "unfair", he said the move would not only impede development, but affect economic growth as well.

"The world's superpowers keep talking about the right to freedom but their actions go against principles that they proclaim," he said at a joint press conference with his Cambodian counterpart, Hun Sen, at the Peace Palace here yesterday.

He said he would raise the matter during the United Nations General Assembly in New York,



HARDI EFFENDI

the United States, this month.

"We do not have any issue with small nations that are being imposed sanctions, but we are forced to stop our trading with them because of the sanctions by the superpowers."

Dr Mahathir and Hun Sen earlier held an hour-long meeting as part of the former's official visit to Cambodia to strengthen bilateral ties.

They witnessed the signing of the double taxation agreement and a memorandum of understanding on tourism promotion between both countries.

Malaysia was represented by Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah, while Cambodia



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, being welcomed by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and his wife, Bun Rany Hun Sen, at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

was represented by Economy and Finance Minister Aun Pornoniroth and Tourism Minister Dr Thong Khon.

Among the issues discussed by both leaders was security in the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea as important trade routes for regional economic prosperity.

Dr Mahathir said: "The Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea are supposed to be 'free' to use for trade activities, thus contributing to efforts to strengthen the regional economy with benefits enjoyed by Asean countries."

He said they had discussed Timor Leste's admission for

Asean membership.

Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied by his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was accorded a state welcome upon his arrival at the Peace Palace.

He inspected a guard of honour mounted by the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.

Hun Sen said he and Dr Mahathir had agreed to direct relevant agencies from both countries to study the best ways to boost Malaysia-Cambodia trade relations.

"We appreciate Malaysia's commitment and dedication to Cambodia's development agenda, particularly in the economy. Malaysia

is one of Cambodia's largest strategic trading partners."

Last year, Malaysia's total trade with Cambodia was valued at US\$558.5 million (RM2.3 billion), an increase of 22.6 per cent since 2017. Malaysia is the fourth largest source of foreign direct investment for Cambodia at US\$2.73 billion.

Hun Sen said Cambodia and Malaysia had agreed to conduct training, and security and defence intelligence sharing.

"During my discussion with Dr Mahathir, we agreed to curb cross-border criminal activities, especially human trafficking, which is a global threat."