

Malaysia backs Brunei on Myanmar representation

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PUTRAJAYA: Moved by the latest happenings in Myanmar, Malaysia is fully backing the decision by Asean Chair Brunei on the issue of Myanmar's representation at the Asean Summit and Related Summits.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said Malaysia had fully pondered its position on the issue as the country had worked hard to bring Myanmar into the Asean fold.

"It (the position) was made after careful consideration and out of necessity to preserve the credibility and integrity of Asean.

"Myanmar remains a valued member of the regional grouping and Malaysia looks forward to the return of democracy in Myanmar and her participation at the highest level in future summits," he said in an intervention at the opening of the 38th and 39th Asean Summits that were held virtually yesterday.

In an unprecedented move, Asean on Oct 15 agreed to bar Myanmar's military chief Min Aung Hlaing, who toppled a civilian government on Feb 1, over his failure to implement a peace plan he agreed with Asean



Unity speaks volumes: Ismail Sabri speaking during the 38th and 39th summits via virtual conference. Also present were Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah and Senior Minister and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali. — Bernama

in April towards ending a bloody political crisis triggered by the coup.

During the Asean foreign ministers meet then, the regional bloc took a bold step to exclude Myanmar's junta from the summits and also shot down the request by

Myanmar's shadow government, the National Unity Government (NUG), to join the summits.

The grouping instead decided to invite a non-political entity to represent the country.

Since the elected government of

Aung San Suu Kyi was overthrown by the junta on Feb 1, there has been internal unrest in Myanmar with nearly 1,000 civilians killed by security forces.

Making his maiden appearance at the Asean Summit as Prime Minister, Ismail Sabri said he hopes the current situation in Myanmar would not have an adverse impact on the repatriation of displaced Rohingya returning to the country.

Addressing the root causes of the Rohingya crisis is still important in pursuing a resolution to the crisis, he added.

"As a country directly impacted by the Rakhine State crisis, Malaysia will continue to support the ongoing effort towards a safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of displaced Rohingya to their place of origin in Rakhine State," he said.

The Prime Minister also expressed Malaysia's regret over the lack of unity on issues that could impact regional peace, stability and security, namely Aukus and the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

"It is regrettable that Asean was unable to come up with a statement on the establishment of the trilateral

security arrangement. It is also regrettable that for the third consecutive time, Asean was able to only submit a procedural decision on the SEANWFZ Treaty to the 76th session of the UN General Assembly," he said.

On the Covid-19 pandemic, Ismail Sabri said Asean must enhance cooperation with like-minded countries and relevant international organisations to ensure that vaccines were affordable, accessible and equitably shared for all.

"The swift delivery of vaccines allocated under the Asean Covid-19 response fund is imperative. Asean should also consider increasing the allocation for member states that are behind in their vaccination drive.

"Asean must also prioritise engagement in health diplomacy through greater collaboration with external partners on expanding public health capacity and the development of vaccines, particularly by enhancing the grouping's access to relevant technology and knowledge.

"This will help Asean be more prepared to meet future health emergencies," he added.