

# 'We are a world family'

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## PM calls on leaders to unite for betterment of humanity

**PETALING JAYA:** With his "Malaysian Family" concept in mind, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob appeared on the world stage to call upon nations to work together in the spirit of a "world family" to address inequality, political instability and global governance amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

While delivering Malaysia's national statement at the General Debate of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, Ismail Sabri voiced the country's stance on health diplomacy, vaccine inequality, humanitarian issues and nuclear disarmament, among others.

"The pandemic has shown that we need to improve our resolve to strengthen international cooperation and multilateralism, and consider ourselves as a family of nations.

"At the same time, the world family must be made a more peaceful, prosperous, sustainable and equitable one," he said via a pre-recorded video yesterday.

In his maiden speech at the UNGA, Ismail Sabri took the chance to highlight the discriminatory rollout of Covid-19 vaccines, pointing out that vaccine-producing countries and wealthy nations were further ahead while the majority of the world's population, mostly from middle-income and least developed countries, remained unvaccinated.

"With the growing frequency of global health threats, this world family must come together and engage in more effective health diplomacy and ensure greater collaboration not just to end this pandemic but on an array of other health-related issues.

"These include expanding the public health capacity of nations, particularly by enhancing their access to relevant technology and knowledge," he said.

He said Malaysia would now play a more prominent role and participate more actively in health diplomacy, as there was a need to regard public health as a global public good rather than the exclusive domain of individual nations.

He acknowledged that Covid-19 had reversed many hard-won gains on the path towards achieving the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as seen in Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) which contracted by 5.6% last year.



**First UN address:** Ismail Sabri reaffirms Malaysia's stance on nuclear disarmament.

To protect the people's livelihood, he said the government had introduced economic stimulus packages worth about US\$130bil or 36% of Malaysia's GDP, added Ismail Sabri.

The government had also rolled out the National Recovery Plan as the nation's exit strategy from the pandemic which included speeding up vaccination rates, which stood at over 500,000 doses daily in recent weeks, as well as reopening key economic sectors, he said.

On climate change, he said Malaysia had ambitious plans to facilitate the transition to a more sustainable, low-carbon and climate-resilient future, including introducing policies like the concept of a circular economy.

"We are confident that they will greatly contribute towards making Malaysia a low-carbon nation by 2050.

"At the same time, developed countries have the responsibility to provide financial resources and technology transfer to the developing world to undertake sustainable initiatives," he added.

In stating Malaysia's firm stance on nuclear disarmament, Ismail Sabri asserted that Malaysia supported the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Malaysia also reaffirmed its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

As an Asean member, he said Malaysia was also committed to preserving the Asean region as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality.

"We strongly believe that the UN membership must speak with one voice on the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities in all corners of the world," he said.

Political and humanitarian issues including those of Palestine and Myanmar, as well as developments in Afghanistan, were also highlighted by the Prime Minister.

He said Malaysia was particularly worried about the humanitarian situation in Myanmar, but equally troubling was the refugee crisis since the mass exodus of the Rohingya in 2017.

"Malaysia currently hosts over 154,000 refugees from Myanmar, comprising 86% of the refugee population in the country, with more than 66% of those from the Rohingya ethnic minority," he said.

On Palestine, he said, Malaysia continued to call for the deployment of a temporary international presence in the city of Al-Quds and to monitor the cessation of hostilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

"The systematic oppression of Palestinians over many years through discriminatory policies, denial of basic civil rights, imposition of harsh conditions, large-scale land confiscation and inhumane acts committed against them is tantamount to the crime of apartheid.

"Malaysia stresses again that Israel must be held responsible and accountable for all its wrongdoings including its flagrant violations of international law," he added.

In condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, Ismail Sabri also called upon the world family to come together to support Afghanistan, including extending humanitarian assistance to the people.

"On this, Malaysia stands ready to extend its assistance and do what it can," he noted.

He ended his speech by calling for member states to come together to reform the UN organisation to strengthen its effectiveness, bring more transparency and enhance its credibility.

"We must close ranks and enhance our unity and cohesion. We must live in peaceful co-existence. Only then will we have a chance to succeed," he said.