



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob meeting United States President Joe Biden at the White House in Washington on Thursday. BERNAMA PIC

DEEPENING DIPLOMATIC TIES

PM MEETS BIDEN, ASEAN LEADERS IN U.S.

US president hosts Ismail Sabri and leaders for two-day Asean-US summit at White House

WASHINGTON

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob met with United States President Joe Biden and Asean leaders at the White House on Thursday.

Biden hosted in person the leaders for a two-day Asean-US Special Summit here.

The historic meeting is seen as the starting point to bringing a positive impact to the diplomatic, trade and economic relations of Malaysia.

Ismail Sabri also stressed on the stand of Asean in Asean-US

cooperation at the summit, apart from hoping that the summit would be the strategic cornerstone for Asean and US to study and explore pragmatic cooperation to strengthen existing ties.

Ismail Sabri later joined Biden and Asean leaders for a group photo at the compound of the White House.

They then proceeded to an official dinner hosted by Biden.

This is the second time such a summit with Southeast Asian leaders is being hosted by an American president.

In February 2016, then president Barack Obama welcomed Asean leaders in Sunnylands, California.

Other Asean leaders spotted at the White House were Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Thai Prime Minister Prayuth

Chan o Cha, Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and Laotian Prime Minister Dr Phankham Viphavanh were also in attendance.

The Philippines, which is currently holding its general election, was represented by Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr.

There was no representative from Myanmar, a country under junta rule following the Feb 1, 2021 coup.

It was reported earlier that the Biden administration had made it a top priority to serve as a strong, reliable partner in Southeast Asia.

In the previous virtual Asean-US Summit in October last year, Biden announced US\$102 million in a new initiative to expand its engagement with Asean.

It covers Covid-19 recovery, health, security, fighting the climate change crisis, stimulating broad-based economic growth and deepening people-to-people ties. **Bernama**