

PM: ENSURE UNIMPEDED SUPPLY CHAINS

This is vital for health security, pandemic recovery, says Ismail Sabri

WASHINGTON

ASEAN and the United States should create a conducive ecosystem to ensure unimpeded

global supply chains, Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob told the Asean-US Special Summit here yesterday.

The prime minister said the move was important to address health security and pandemic recovery issues.

He said they should also collaborate in vaccine development through joint research programmes, networking and linkages in vaccine-related fields.

The 10-member bloc and the US could strengthen cooperation in the detection, surveillance and response to infectious diseases and emerging health threats, he told US Vice-President Kamala

Harris and Asean leaders during a working lunch hosted by Harris in conjunction with the two-day summit held at the US State Department.

He also said Asean and the US needed to enhance sustainability in trade and investment, human capital development in digitalisation, economic resilience and integration in the region.

"Asean and the US should harness the potential of digitalisation and the fourth industrial revolution."

On maritime cooperation, Ismail Sabri said Malaysia believed that Asean and the US should improve capacity building, and boost the exchange and sharing of intelligence and information.

The initiatives could prevent, combat or counter criminal activities at sea, especially piracy.

Later at a press conference, Ismail Sabri said Asean leaders showed a collective stand during the discussions on the Russia-Ukraine war and the South China Sea.

"Asean wanted the Russia-Ukraine crisis to be resolved on the negotiation table. War does



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob at a press conference following the final session of the Asean-United States Special Summit in Washington yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

not benefit anyone. In fact, many would suffer great loss because of the war," he said.

In this context, Malaysia, he said, felt that the US should use its influence to help solve the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

Ismail Sabri said Malaysia pointed out that Southeast Asian countries were also affected by the war, especially in terms of the rise in inflation and food prices, leading to the call for the war to be resolved peacefully.

On Feb 24, Russia launched a military operation on Ukraine, days after Kremlin recognised the independence of two break-away regions in eastern Ukraine.

On the South China Sea, Ismail Sabri said Asean was firm in its stand that the waterway should be free from interferences.

"The South China Sea must remain free, in line with the Free-

dom of Navigation, which is an international law (of the sea).

"Any conflict in the area will affect global supply chains."

"Asean solidarity on international issues was obvious during the discussion with President Joe Biden. The Asean principles of zone of peace, freedom and neutrality were perfectly translated during the meeting."

Ismail Sabri said he had also raised the Palestinian issue during the meeting and called for Washington to use its influence to resolve the issue.

"Israeli atrocities must be stopped. The US must be honest in resolving the issue. If the US can take swift action in Ukraine, we want the same swift action to be taken on the Palestinian issue."

Ismail Sabri said the Myanmar issue was also raised at the meet-

ing, and the need for the Five-Point Consensus to be observed in resolving the conflict.

The meeting was attended by all Asean leaders except from Myanmar and the Philippines. Myanmar was not invited while the Philippines has just concluded its national election.

Ismail Sabri described his working visit to the US as a "success" and Malaysia-US ties had been strengthened.

"The US is important to Malaysia in terms of politics and trade. The US is the second largest trading partner and fourth largest in terms of investment in Malaysia."

Ismail Sabri said his engagement with American investors and captains of industries indicated that there were bigger potential investments ahead for Malaysia. **Bernama**