

# 'Enhance cooperation in Asia'

## Ismail Sabri: Strengthen regional collaboration to meet global challenges

TOKYO: Asian countries have been urged to play a stronger role in leading a divided world, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

In his keynote address at the Nikkei Conference here, he proposed that Asia needed to strengthen regional economic integration, cooperation and consultation mechanisms, as well as cooperation in addressing the challenges of climate change.

"These are among the things that can be given attention to in offering solutions to global issues and at the same time, enhance multilateral cooperation among countries in Asia," he said in his inaugural appearance at the International Conference on the Future of Asia with the theme "Redefining Asia's Role in a Divided World", reported Bernama.

Ismail Sabri said the main thing in strengthening regional economic integration is to focus on strengthening the ability of the Asian region in dealing with changes in globalisation after the Covid-19 pandemic.

With globalisation now on the decline, he urged policymakers, as well as business leaders, in Asia to step up efforts to strengthen regional cooperation in ensuring sustainable economic growth.

He said efforts should also be made to make the regional supply



**Strengthening relations:** Ismail Sabri (right) with Nikkei Chairman Naotoshi Okada before the conference in Tokyo, Japan. – Bernama

chain more resilient through the support of digital infrastructure investment and facilitating efforts to develop capacity towards enhancing the local supply chain.

According to Ismail Sabri, Asia is in a good position to dominate the world's largest e-commerce market, at 57% or US\$1.1 trillion (RM4.8

trillion) of the world e-commerce sales value in 2019 and is expected to reach 61% or US\$1.9 trillion (RM8.3 trillion) by 2024.

On the importance of strengthening cooperation and consultation mechanisms, Ismail Sabri said Malaysia recognised the importance of consultation, either at the

South-East Asian level or in Malaysia itself, to find solutions to common challenges or disputes.

This is done through the Asean mechanisms such as the Asean Regional Forum, the Asean Plus Three meeting, and the Asean Plus Defence Ministers' Meeting, he added.

Ismail Sabri said in an effort to strengthen Asia's role through regional cooperation mechanisms, Asean member countries needed to be careful in responding to existing and new issues.

"There is no need for a new framework; instead, the existing platform can be used for the purpose," he added.

On climate change, Ismail Sabri said Asia, especially South-East Asia, was the region most vulnerable to its effects.

In 2021, he said, more than 57 million people became victims of climate change-related disasters in the Asia Pacific region and by 2050, much of Asia had been predicted to face extreme rising temperatures, rainfall and heat waves, which will wreak havoc on the economy and society.

"The climate change crisis is a global issue and no country can handle it alone," he said, adding that for developing countries, it was very worrying as the cost and capacity needed to deal with it would erode resources to create economic opportunities for the people.

He said Malaysia was committed to working with countries with a vision to address climate change, and described the "Asia Zero Emission Community" inspired by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida as a good starting point.