

Proposal to create regional medical supply reserve

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KUALA LUMPUR: Asean has proposed the creation of a regional reserve of medical supplies under the Asean Plus Three (APT) framework to strengthen the region's preparedness for future health crises, a move Malaysia is urging member states to fast-track.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who chaired the 28th APT Summit at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre yesterday, said the establishment of the Asean+3 Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies was crucial to ensuring the region's collective readiness in facing future pandemics or similar threats.

"We should proceed to establish the proposed APT reserve on medical supplies for public health emergencies to prepare for future health crises."

He said the APT grouping, which brings together Asean member states with China, Japan and South Korea, had consistently proven its value during times of crisis.

"Born in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1996, the APT has prevailed through other crises and proven its effectiveness during the Covid-19 era," he said, adding that the grouping must now evolve beyond past achievements to ensure fairness, inclusivity and shared prosperity in the next phase of regional growth.

"Our task is clear, to ensure that growth is fair, prosperity is widely shared and progress brings peace. We must prepare our youth and women for an East Asia that is sustainable, inclusive and interconnected."

The Asean+3 Summit was co-chaired by Anwar, Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu, and South Korean President Lee Jae-myung.

Anwar also emphasised that regional growth must be fair and inclusive, ensuring that prosperity is broadly shared and that progress contributes to lasting peace and stability.

He said it was vital to prepare the youth and women of Asean+3 for a region that is sustainable, inclusive and interconnected.

The prime minister also looked forward to a constructive engagement on the future of this cooperation, in which the region continues to serve as a cradle of stability, opportunity, and hope.

Toshimitsu, the current coordinator for the Plus Three countries, reaffirmed Tokyo's commitment to regional food and financial security via mechanisms such as the APT Emergency Rice Reserve and the Chiang Mai Initiative.

Meanwhile, Li called on regional economies to uphold "openness and cooperation" amid rising protectionism, adding that the "East Asian Miracle" remains a living story rather than a chapter of the past.