

MALAYSIA MUST SUSTAIN ASEAN AXIS IN RESURGENCE OF MAJOR POWERS GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION - SULTAN NAZRIN

Bernama News | General News | 18/11/2021 | Author: NUR ASHIKIN ABDUL AZIZ | Others

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysian diplomacy must strive hard to sustain the equidistance of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as an organisation in the backdrop of a resurgence in geopolitical competition among the major powers, said Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Shah.

Sultan Nazrin, who is the royal patron of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR), said it was critical for Malaysia and ASEAN to work cordially with all countries for mutual peace and prosperity, even if some member states might be susceptible to persuasion or pressure to tilt towards one side or another.

“Malaysia and ASEAN have remained neutral in the past. They have distanced themselves from such confrontations and conflicts.

“It is our fervent hope that the competition (among major powers) remains peaceful and benign, and does not deteriorate into open confrontation.”

He said this in his address entitled “Shaping A New Generation of Diplomats” at the IDFR’s 30th-anniversary celebration, here today.

Sultan Nazrin said Malaysia should also continue to pursue increased strategic collaboration with like-minded states, particularly in the region, to capitalise on new opportunities in a highly competitive environment of a globalised world.

In this regard, he said Malaysia and its Southeast Asian neighbours have done well to optimise their political and diplomatic capabilities as small to middle powers, by leveraging on productive regionalism to empower themselves further.

“As Malaysia approaches its next turn as ASEAN Chair in 2025, the Foreign Ministry should map out priorities that best promote regional and national well-being, with the support of regional partners,” he said.

The Perak ruler said Malaysian diplomacy must also commit to enhancing its efforts to work with other government and non-governmental international institutions to foster a more peaceful, just and humane international order.

He said institutions such as the United Nations General Assembly is important for promoting the rule of law in the relations among states while humanitarian organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross form part of an international order that strives to discipline the conduct of war and alleviate the suffering of those unavoidably affected.

-- MORE

NAZRIN-ASEAN 3 KUALA LUMPUR

“As the 21st century progresses, Wisma Putra must perforce engage even more intensely with the private sector and civil society organisations at home and abroad.

“Malaysia relies heavily on the private sector for generating much of the county’s wealth,” he said.

In his speech, Sultan Nazrin also expressed his opinion on what shapes a new generation of diplomats, stating that Malaysian diplomats must continue to cultivate and enhance their roles as historians, scientists, communicators and bureaucrats to help Wisma Putra to better equip itself.

He said diplomats who lack a nuanced appreciation of history might struggle to produce the precise and insightful analyses that were vital for the making of sound foreign policy, while a reasonable grasp of science was important for them to respond effectively to the most pressing and complex foreign policy issues of our time.

“These include the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, and new technologies, all of which are associated with what some term ‘non-traditional’ security threats,” he said.

Sultan Nazrin said as a communicator, diplomats were encouraged to embrace digital diplomacy to complement traditional face-to-face diplomacy as it could greatly assist in projecting a state’s foreign policy position to domestic and foreign audiences.

“Familiarity with social media platforms, and a recognition of both their value and the problems they may pose, are essential for diplomats of the 21st century,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Sultan said as bureaucrats, diplomats together with the Foreign Ministry play the central role in crafting the foreign policy as they weigh the national interest relating to external issues and assess the challenges and opportunities presented by them.

He said other agencies may take the lead in particular areas in international forums such as those on trade, defence and security but the indispensable constant in all of them is Wisma Putra as they ironed out conflicting interests and competing priorities, if any, based on the best interests of the nation.

TAG: Sultan Nazrin, ASEAN, IDFR, diplomacy, major powers, diplomats, foreign policies, COVID-19, Wisma Putra

-- BERNAMA
NAAA NHA