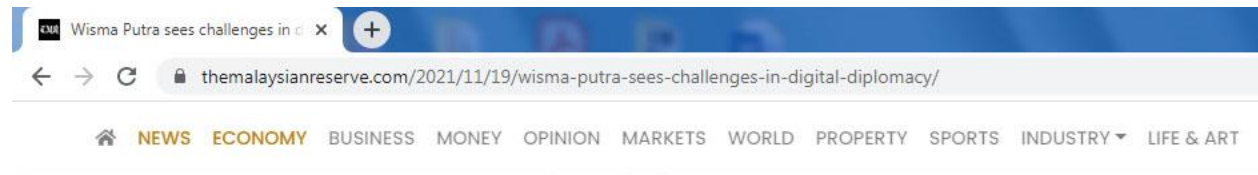


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## Wisma Putra sees challenges in digital diplomacy



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***A face-to-face meeting is required, especially when it comes to crisis and conflict resolution***

**by ANIS HAZIM / pic by TMR FILE**

THE Foreign Affairs Ministry (Wisma Putra) acknowledges that diplomacy in the post-pandemic world is challenging due to an absence of physical interaction.

Its minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah (*picture*) said diplomacy needs rapport and networking which is a hurdle to build digitally.

“People may think it saves time, energy and resources by meeting virtually, but there are meetings where you just cannot substitute with video conferencing.

“You need to meet up especially when it comes to crisis and conflict resolution,” Saifuddin told the press after the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) Royal Address 2021 ceremony with Sultan Nazrin Shah yesterday.

He said digital diplomacy cannot ever replace a close relationship where diplomats can get together over dinner or a golf game.

“That rapport needs to be built over time which requires face-to-face communication,” he said.

Sultan Nazrin, who is the royal patron of IDFR had also addressed the importance of digital diplomacy during his speech.

He encouraged diplomats to embrace digital diplomacy to complement traditional face-to-face diplomacy.

According to him, digital diplomacy could greatly assist in projecting a state’s foreign policy position to domestic and foreign audiences.

At the same time, he urged Malaysia to strengthen Asean as an organisation in re-establishing the geopolitical competition between major powers.

“It is critical for Malaysia and Asean to work with all countries for mutual peace and prosperity, even if some member states might be vulnerable to persuasion or pressure to lean towards one side or another,” Sultan Nazrin said.

He added that Malaysia should also continue to pursue increased strategic collaboration with like-minded countries, particularly in the region, to capitalise on new opportunities in a highly competitive global environment.

“As Malaysia approaches its next turn as the Asean Chair in 2025, Wisma Putra should map out priorities that best promote regional and national wellbeing with the support of regional partners,” he said.

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