

US continues to strengthen ties with Sarawak

SARAWAK

BP EDITOR 10 - OCTOBER 2, 2021



Photo provided by the US Embassy in Kuala Lumpur shows Uggah (top photo) in a discussion with McFeeters (bottom photo, second left) and his team during their meet, held as part of the US Ambassador's virtual visit to Sarawak.

KUCHING (Oct 2): The US would continue to work with partners in Sarawak in promoting the state's security and prosperity.

This was highlighted throughout the five-day virtual visit to Sarawak conducted by US Ambassador to Malaysia Brian D McFeeters, which concluded yesterday.

“The Covid-19 pandemic has not stopped the US Embassy and Ambassador McFeeters from innovatively interacting with different parts of Malaysia.

“From Sept 27 to Oct 1, the Ambassador conducted a virtual visit to Sarawak through a series of meetings with Sarawak government officials, businesses, NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and Sarawakian alumni of the US Embassy exchange programmes, to discuss US-Sarawak cooperation in the matters of public health, the environment, digital inclusion, people-to-people exchanges, and more,” said the US Embassy in Kuala Lumpur in a press statement issued on Friday.

The Sarawak trip was McFeeters' third virtual visit outside of the Klang Valley this year – prior to this, he visited Penang in July, and Sabah in August.

The US Ambassador had met with Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas, as well as with Minister of Local Government and Housing Dato Sri Dr Sim Kui Hian who is also the state's minister in charge of health matters.

“Ambassador McFeeters discussed the US Government’s desire to strengthen the US-Sarawak public health partnership with both leaders.

“Covid-19 remains the top priority for the US, and the US Embassy will continue to assist Malaysia to fight the pandemic.

“In addition to the one million doses of Pfizer vaccines donated to Malaysia in July, the US Government also provided RM2 million for ambulance donations and other support to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) chapters in Sabah and Sarawak last year.

“The US will also continue to support and encourage research partnerships that help to identify future zoonotic diseases and their threats, such as that between Duke University and Sibuh Hospital,” said the US Embassy.

It also said McFeeters shared with Uggah the US Government’s focus on climate change and the desire to support Sarawak in pursuing its clean energy agenda.

The same subject was also discussed during sessions with Petroleum Sarawak Bhd (Petros) group chief executive officer Datuk Sauu Kakok, as well as Sarawak Biodiversity Centre (SBC) chief executive officer Dr Charlie Yeo.

“Ambassador McFeeters highlighted the US Government’s interest in providing technical assistance and exchanging best practices in green energy technology, conservation, and biotech to tackle the climate crisis.

“They discussed the potential of importing US technologies and products to support Malaysian companies in their clean energy agenda, and also explored ways for scientific and research cooperation with US firms and institutions could be increased.”

In his meeting the state’s Opposition Leader, Dato Sri Wong Soon Koh, McFeeters highlighted the US commitment to security cooperation in Sarawak and discussed shared priorities over border security and human rights, as well as issues pertaining to the stateless community in Sarawak.

Additionally, the US would remain committed to pursuing digital inclusion and youth empowerment with Sarawak, said the Embassy.

It pointed out that since 2004, the Embassy had partnered with Pustaka Negeri Sarawak to host the ‘American Corner (AC) Sarawak’ – a platform for Sarawakians to visit and learn more about ‘the United States’ and the US-Malaysia partnership.

“American Corner Sarawak has been vital in organising education outreaches and programmes that encourage and support young makers and creators through access to technology and other resources.

“Over the coming year, AC Sarawak will also focus on programmes related to digital literacy and digital economy,” said the Embassy, adding that McFeeters highlighted the value of this partnership during his meeting with Pustaka Negeri Sarawak’s acting chief executive Arpah Adenan.

Moreover, the Embassy said McFeeters had the opportunity to learn about Sarawak’s history and cultural diversity through a virtual tour with Sarawakian alumni of the US government exchange programmes.

“The interactive session also introduced the Ambassador to Sarawak’s unique local cuisine, and he appreciated the opportunity to ‘visit’ Sarawak and would look forward to visiting in person as soon as conditions would allow it,” it added.

The US Embassy also spoke about the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) – a US Government’s signature programme aimed at strengthening leadership development and networking in Southeast Asia.

The initiative sought to build the leadership capabilities of youths in the region, strengthen ties between the US and Southeast Asia, and nurture an Asean community, through a variety of engagements, including US educational and cultural exchanges, regional exchanges, and seed-funding.

The Embassy said: “This October, the Embassy in collaboration with the Biji-biji Initiative and Me.reka will launch ‘YSEALI Bootcamp 2021: Sparking Digital Action – Borneo Edition’.

“The programme will consist of a webinar series, a three-week boot camp, and a mentorship component all designed to empower youths to champion social issues facing communities in Sabah and Sarawak, with a focus on the themes of diversity and inclusion, the environment, and digital equity.

“We also plan to organise a YSEALI regional workshop on digital connectivity in Sarawak in 2022. Young leaders from Sarawak, Malaysia, and others from Asean will gather to discuss how connectivity and digital access can transform communities and economies.”

The US Embassy also took the opportunity of the Ambassador’s Sarawak visit to highlight the US Government-funded Community Solutions Programme (CSP).

“Applications are now open for the CSP, which provides international community leaders aged between 25 and 38, with a four-month professional development experience in the US including a 35-hour per week practicum at a US host organisation and a 10-hour per week leadership development course.

“Notable alumni include social entrepreneurs Melisa Lin, Lilian Chen and Chan Zi Xing through Langit Collective, which promotes unique and heirloom agricultural produce from the farmers in East Malaysia.

“To apply, go to <http://bit.ly/csp2022apply>,” it added.