

M'sia wants Asean unity on Suu Kyi's detention
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The government today urged a united stand from Southeast Asian nations to push for the release of detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, a week before her current house arrest is reviewed.

"Asean countries must act together. There cannot (just) be some Asean countries that may be sympathetic towards what is happening (in Myanmar)," Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar told reporters.

"There must be one way of looking at things. But if we start to play our own national interest rather than looking at the whole interest of Asean, that is going to be a problem," he said, without elaborating.

Syed Hamid recently called on Burma (renamed Myanmar by the junta) to free Nobel prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for most of the past 17 years.

Her detention comes up for review by the junta on May 27 and Syed Hamid said it was difficult to tell if the military junta would free her.

"It is impossible to speculate what the government will do. We do not know very much about the Myanmar government," he said.

Malaysia, a leading investor in the resource-rich country, has previously signalled the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations is frustrated with member Burma, saying the military regime had snubbed efforts to push for democracy.

International pressure

Syed Hamid said Asean came under international pressure whenever Aung San Suu Kyi's supporters were detained or her arrest was extended, and called on the military junta to be sensitive towards its Southeast Asian neighbours.

"Every time they make new arrests or the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi continues, not only Myanmar is questioned, the whole of Asean is questioned," he said.

"I think Myanmar has to be sympathetic towards the predicament of Asean countries," he added.

Syed Hamid said Aung San Suu Kyi's detention was an "issue of concern and worry," for Asean, but added the group was opposed to Burma being referred to the United Nations Security Council.

The United States in January introduced a draft resolution at the Security Council urging Burma's rulers to initiate democratic reforms.