

**Get tough on Burma**  
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**Bede Hong**

The Malaysian Parliamentary Caucus on Democracy in Myanmar has urged the government to take a tougher stand, including imposing sanctions against the country's military leaders.

Opposition leader and caucus member Lim Kit Siang said Malaysia should take a more activist international position to push for the democratisation of the war torn country.

"Malaysian and Asean cannot afford to step back from our responsibility in encouraging an end to the civil war, genuine political reform and respect for human rights in Burma," said Lim during the committee stage debate of 2007 Supplementary Estimates in Parliament yesterday.

"Malaysian must have the courage to tell Burma's generals that they need to change their ways and mindset," he added.

Prominent lawyer Zaid Ibrahim (BN - Kota Bharu) chairs the caucus, in addition to the Asean Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus.

Although Asean countries no longer speak in defence of junta's poor human rights record, they abide by the organisation's policy of non-interference in local politics.

### **Protection of refugees**

However, Lim said this should change.

"Malaysian and other governments in Asean must take responsibility for the protection of refugees from Burma.

"They share in the blame for having allowed the situation to drag on for so many decades," he added.

Lim cited a recent case where a Burmese girl went missing in Cheras last month. The seven-year-old girl, Dally, disappeared on the eve of the day she and her family were to leave for resettlement in the United States.

"[The caucus] calls on the Malaysian government to ensure that the authorities act promptly [in investigating] the murder of Dally and to adopt policies and practices to ensure future crimes .. towards unprotected refugee children do not recur," he said.

Lim said how Asean deals with Burma would determine whether it would remain the focal point of regional integration and continued relevance.

"Burma is the only country in the world to keep a Nobel Peace laureate (political leader and dissident Aung San Suu Kyi) under detention. The regime's despicable treatment of such an honourable citizen speaks louder than words," he said.

Lim said with South Korean Ban Ki-Moon as the UN secretary general, "the onus is now on

our region to demonstrate its commitment to the people of Burma."

He expressed disappointment that the government has not supported the annual resolutions on Burma at the UN general assembly.

"As a member of the UN human rights council, Malaysia is particularly well placed to take an active role in enabling the UN to embark on a more committed and forceful approach to change the situation in Burma.

"We are calling for a more people-centred Asean, and an Asean that is ready to meet non-traditional and trans-boundary challenges and crisis through regional and international co-operation. If we are serious we cannot shed our responsibilities for the welfare of the population of Burma," he added.

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