

We're not giving up on Burma
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 24, 2007

Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said on Monday that Southeast Asian nations will not give up trying to restore democracy to Burma (now known as Myanmar) even though efforts to coax along the military-ruled state have been unsuccessful.

He admitted efforts to encourage democracy in Burma and to free detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi had yielded few results, but said changes would take time.

"To compel Myanmar is difficult as it is a free and sovereign country," Syed Hamid was quoted as saying by the state Bernama news agency.

"We have to use this approach (of coaxing them) although it may take some time to influence the leaders there," he said.

The minister rejected suggestions that efforts by Malaysia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations had reached an impasse, saying that the military regime had "expressed commitment to democracy."

"The thing is that they are apprehensive about how democracy can flourish if not enough preparation is done, especially to ensure political stability and national security," said Syed Hamid.

Citing regime change in Iraq, he said efforts to introduce democratic reforms in any country would be pointless if it descended into chaos in the process.

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