

Group: It's time to end crisis

'Asean must lead to seek a peaceful resolution in Myanmar'

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PETALING JAYA: The call for Asean countries to take a more active role to resolve the Myanmar crisis must be put into action and not remain just words, says Representative of Malaysia to the Asean Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Eric Paulsen.

He said Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin's speech in pushing other Asean countries to do something about the violence in Myanmar should be applauded.

Paulsen noted that historically, it had been difficult to engage with the Tatmadaw (Myanmar's armed forces) which toppled the elected Myanmar government in a coup d'etat on Feb 1.

"The Leaders' Meeting is the culmination of months of diplomatic efforts by Asean and various member states, including Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore which had advocated for a stronger response," said Paulsen.

On Saturday, Asean leaders reached a five-point consensus on the following: an immediate cessation of violence, constructive dialogue among all parties concerned, for a special envoy of the Asean Chair to facilitate mediation with the assistance of the secretary-general of Asean, for Asean to provide humanitarian assistance and for



Addressing the media: Muhyiddin talking to Malaysian reporters after attending the special Asean Leaders' Meeting in Jakarta. — Bernama

the special envoy and delegation to visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned.

Paulsen said all parties must work together to seek a peaceful resolution in the interests of the Myanmar people.

"Failing to do so risks Myanmar descending into a state collapse, civil war and a humanitarian disaster, which would have enormous

implications for Asean and our region," he said.

He pointed out that the Asean five-point consensus was a breakthrough as it provided an entry point and framework for constructive dialogue.

"However, conspicuously missing from the five points is the release of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other political pris-

oners, even though it was called for by Malaysia and other member states.

"The hard work begins now as obviously, nothing will be achieved if these five points, agreed by consensus, are not translated into reality, on the ground, for the benefit of the Myanmar people," said Paulsen when contacted.

Solaris Strategies Singapore senior international affairs analyst Dr Mustafa Izzuddin said Muhyiddin's speech made some inroad for a political resolution.

"I believe Muhyiddin wanted to ensure an air of diplomatic optimism and positivity with his remarks so as to make further inroads in achieving a political resolution to the conflict in Myanmar.

"The proof of the pudding is, however, in the eating and so the eyes will be on the military on whether they will abide by the five-point statement at the summit, notably to cease the killings and release the political prisoners.

"I do not believe Asean has any choice but to engage the junta as they hold the reins of power in Myanmar.

"The next step for Asean leaders is to engage the leaders of the national unity government and thereafter mediate the conflict, find a resolution and get back on the road of democratisation," said Mustafa.