

Anwar heads to Turkiye in gesture of solidarity

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said his one-day visit to Turkiye is a reflection of Malaysia's deep concern and solidarity with its people who have been affected by the devastating earthquake.

He said due to his work commitments, he was initially hesitant to visit the country, but changed his mind after he received calls from president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

"I believe that as friends, we should always be there to give our support," he told reporters after a meeting with senators at Parliament lobby yesterday.

Anwar is expected to return to Malaysia tonight and will go to Parliament tomorrow.

"Initially, I was reluctant (to go to Turkiye) because the Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (SMART) is already there and a (field) hospital has been set up.

"However, in the spirit of friendship I have decided to go there," he said.

He added that he will be accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir.

Earlier, during Minister's Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat, Anwar said Erdogan had called him twice asking him to go to Turkiye.

He also said Malaysia has successfully collected a total of RM20mil in humanitarian aid to help earthquake victims in Turkiye

and Syria.

He added the contribution included US\$1mil (RM4.3mil) each from the Malaysian government and the Sultan of Johor, with the remaining donations coming from various groups, including Malaysian companies.

He said Malaysia has sent two teams from SMART while the armed forces is also sending its own rescue team.

He was responding to a question from Datuk Iskandar Dzulkarnain Abdul Khalid (PN-Kuala Kangsar) who wanted to know the form of aid provided by the Malaysian government to help victims of the earthquake in Turkiye and Syria.

On the cost of sending the

SMART teams, Anwar said their flight was fully paid for by Turkish Airlines, with the government spending about RM4mil for the purpose.

On a separate matter, Anwar said Malaysia decided to channel aid to Syria including medical equipment and humanitarian missions regardless of US sanctions policies.

"Malaysia will still send a team to help as soon as there is a response from the Syrian government, but funding and medical equipment have been decided and the defence Minister (Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan) wants to install hospital equipment in Syria," he added.

A large earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale hit southern

Turkiye and northwestern Syria last Monday and has claimed tens of thousands of lives, with tremors also felt in Cyprus and Lebanon.

Last Tuesday, Turkiye declared a three-month state of emergency in 10 provinces namely Adana, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaras, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye and Sanliurfa to ensure the search and rescue mission runs smoothly