

Anwar: Asean shouldn't be silent

'Cooperation and collaboration key to solving issues affecting region'

MANILA: Decision-making by consensus continues to be the central tenet of Asean, but that does not mean the grouping should keep silent over developments in member states that affect the wider region, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said criticisms of Asean were particularly focused on two of its principles: decision-making by consensus and non-interference.

"Today, decision-making by consensus continues to be a central tenet of Asean. This, however, does not mean that Asean should remain silent over developments in member states that affect the wider region or particularly egregious violations of the Asean Charter by its own members.

"In all honesty, I believe that non-interference is not a licence for indifference," he said in a talk entitled "30 Years After the Asian Renaissance: Strategic Takeaways for Asean" at the University of the Philippines (UP) yesterday.

On the need to temporarily carve out Myanmar due to its blatant human rights violations, Anwar said it was imperative to stay true to one of the key ideals of Asean - standing up for the cause of justice



What an honour: Anwar being awarded the honorary doctorate for being a scholar and an internationally acclaimed expert on economics, democracy, freedom, governance, Islam and an advocate for accountability. - Bernama

and rule of law.

During his bilateral meeting with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr at Malacanang Palace on Wednesday, Anwar had expressed concern about the unresolved Myanmar issue, which he said adversely affected Malaysia due to the huge number of its refugees, which exceeded 200,000 people.

"The president, in his wisdom, has reiterated the need for the five-

point consensus, but I would certainly suggest exploring new areas on how the Myanmar junta can be persuaded to work and collaborate as a team within Asean and resolve the outstanding issue which cannot be considered as purely internal because it is affecting the security and welfare of the region," he said during a joint press briefing with the Philippine president.

Anwar also called on Asean mem-

ber countries to stand as cooperative partners working for the betterment of their people in a just and peaceful world.

"Hence, cooperation and collaboration across the board in all the crucial matters that bind us as a solid multilateral, multicultural, and diverse regional grouping must be the way forward for Asean," he said.

Anwar congratulated the

Philippines and the Filipino people for the courage of their convictions in the cause of democracy.

"You have demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that you are able to confront arrogant powers and show to us, in Asean and beyond, that defeat in times of trouble is not an option.

"You have shown that democracy is not a mere slogan to be bandied about only in times of elections and that, rightfully used, democracy does empower the people to determine their own futures for the better," said the prime minister.

Earlier, Anwar, who was here on a two-day official visit, was conferred the Doctor of Laws degree by the university in a ceremony held at the university's Villamor Hall.

According to a statement by the university, Anwar was awarded the honorary doctorate for being a scholar and an internationally acclaimed expert on economics, democracy, freedom, governance, Islam and the need for accountability.

He was conferred the degree by the Chairperson of the Commission of Higher Education, J. Prospero E. De Vera III, and UP President and Co-Chair of the UP Board of Regents, Angelo A. Jimenez. — Bernama