

# 'Non-interference' no excuse for indifference, Asean told

**MANILA:** Decision-making by consensus continues to be the primary doctrine of Asean, but it does not mean the regional grouping should not voice its opinions over developments in member states that affect the wider region, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said criticisms on Asean particularly focus 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 during a talk entitled *30 Years After The Asian Renaissance: Strategic Takeaways for Asean* at the University of

**> Principle adopted by grouping does not mean it should be silent over developments affecting member states, says PM**

Philippines yesterday.

He arrived in the Philippines on Wednesday for a two-day official visit, the fifth Asean country he has visited since being appointed as Malaysia's prime minister last year.

On the need to temporarily carve out Myanmar, which he mentioned in Bangkok recently, on account of its blatant human rights violations, the prime minister stressed that it was imperative to stay true to one of the key ideals of Asean, of standing for the cause of justice and the rule of law.

During his bilateral meeting with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr at Malacanang Palace on Wednesday, Anwar had expressed his concern about the unresolved

Myanmar issue, which is adversely affecting Malaysia due to the huge number of its refugees.

He said the number of Myanmar refugees in Malaysia had exceeded 200,000 people.

"The (Philippine) 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 was speaking during a joint media briefing with the Philippine president.

Anwar also called on Asean

member countries to stand as cooperative partners working towards the betterment of its 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 congratulated the Philippines and the Filipino people for the courage of their convictions in the cause of democracy, Bernama reported.

"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 future for the better," said Anwar.