

Slow going in peace plan

Anwar: Collective will of all parties in Malaysia needed

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia has expressed disappointment over the lack of meaningful and real progress in the implementation of an Asean plan to tackle the humanitarian crisis and human rights violations in Myanmar, which have entered their third year.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the situation in Myanmar remained challenging and progress towards a resolution had been slow despite the Five-Point Consensus (SPC) adopted by Asean leaders more than two years ago.

In a written interview with *The Star*, the Prime Minister said that Indonesia, which is current chair of Asean, had undertaken 60 engagements with various stakeholders in Myanmar, but progress remained slow.

"Malaysia fully supports the efforts of Indonesia to implement the 5PC and remains supportive of the efforts of the Special Envoy of the chair," he said.

Anwar is in Labuan Bajo, West Manggarai city in East Nusa Tenggara province, for the 42nd Asean summit which began yesterday, chaired by Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo.

Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi has been reported as saying that Indonesia has for months been quietly engaging key stakeholders in Myanmar's conflict, as well as its neighbours India, Thailand and China in an effort to kick-start a peace process as violence intensifies.

But criticisms have surfaced on whether this move has been fruitful.

In the latest act, wire agencies reported that Myanmar's military has intensified attacks and airstrikes on resistance forces and ethnic minority rebels as it tries to consolidate power ahead of a planned election.

Asean leaders yesterday issued a statement saying they were deeply concerned with the ongoing violence in Myanmar and urged the immediate cessation of all forms of violence and the use of force.

They sought the creation of "a conducive environment for the safe and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance and inclusive national dialogues".

The leaders yesterday also supported Jokowi's recent statement in response to the recent attack on a convoy of the Asean Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) and the Asean Monitoring Team in Myanmar.

"We condemn the attack and underlined that the perpetrators must be held accountable," they added in their statement.

Anwar also said that Malaysia would, at the bilateral level, use its good relations with other countries to rally the international community to support Asean's efforts in addressing the crisis.

"Malaysia will also work with the special envoy of the UN secretary-general on this matter.

"Ultimately, a peaceful resolution in Myanmar can only be achieved by the collective will of all the parties concerned in that country to uphold the aspirations

of the people of Myanmar as reflected in its November 2020 general election," he added.

Asean has been struggling to get Myanmar's military junta to come on board and adhere to the SPC drawn up by the regional grouping after a coup threw out the democratically-elected government in February 2021, triggering violence that killed thousands and displaced more than a million people.

Two months after the coup, Asean leaders sat down for an emergency summit in Jakarta and adopted the 5PC that called for an immediate end to the violence, a visit by a special envoy to foster dialogue among contending parties, and provision of humanitarian aid.

The Jakarta summit was attended by junta leader Gen Min Aung Hlaing.