

ANWAR HOLDS MEETING ON MIDEAST CRISIS

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PG. 2

He discusses taking immediate steps and evacuation of Malaysians

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has convened a special meeting regarding the Iran-Israel conflict yesterday.

Before the meeting, he said he would discuss with his ministers and other officials on formulating immediate steps to take regarding the conflict.

Anwar said the meeting at 6pm would also discuss the evacuation of Malaysians.

He added that Malaysia at the international stage would continue to press for peaceful solutions in the Middle East.

"Our international stance, surely we must demand that a guarantee for peaceful resolution in the Middle East is met because what happens there will affect world peace and the global economy."

He said this after opening the Fifth International Convention and Celebration of Indian statesman Dr Ambedkar's 133rd Birthday and Hari Raya celebration here.

On Saturday, Iran launched drones and missiles at Israel in response to an April 1 attack by Israel on Iran's consulate in Damascus, Syria.

The United Nations Security Council held an emergency meeting yesterday about Iran's drone and missile attack on Israel.

Following the attacks, Iran warned Israel not to retaliate militarily, with Teheran presenting the attacks as a "justified response" to the strike on the consulate.

"The matter can be deemed concluded," Iran's mission to the United Nations said in a post on X just a few hours after the start of the operation.

"However, should the Israeli regime make another mistake, Iran's response will be considerably more severe," the Iranian

mission said.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps said they had launched "dozens of drones and missiles" at military sites in Israel.

"Iran's military action was in response to the Zionist regime's aggression against our diplomatic premises in Damascus," the Iranian mission to the UN said.

The attack, according to the mission, was "conducted on the strength of Article 51 of the UN Charter relating to legitimate defence".

However Israel's army said it had shot down 99 per cent of the drones and missiles with the help of the United States and other allies, declaring Iran's attack as "foiled".

In his speech at the event, Anwar said the government had never sidelined the Indian community, and many programmes had been designed to help them.

He said every programme implemented was universal and was inclusive of all races, in line with the Malaysia Madani aspirations.

Citing hardcore poverty, he said the problem had been addressed in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Melaka and Penang, regardless of race.

"If I don't do anything to help the Indian community, they have the right to criticise me.

"I don't care whether they are Malays, Chinese or Indians, successful or not. I care about the majority who are underprivileged.

"That's why I say the first priority is to eradicate poverty, and coincidentally, in terms of numbers, it's the Malay community.

"But in terms of ratio, in Kuala Lumpur and Negri Sembilan, the community that benefits the most is the Indian community.

"I don't look at it from a racial perspective. If they are hardcore

poor, they should be helped," he said.

He said Malaysian Indians were integral to the country and that as prime minister, the community had his special attention and that of the Prime Minister's Office.

"Let me illustrate one area where I have listened to your concerns, my Indian brothers and sisters. We have listened, and indeed, we do care immensely.

"I am pleased to say that the Malaysian Indian Transformation Unit (Mitra) has been returned to the Prime Minister's Office, directly under my pur-view."

Anwar, however, said Mitra was not the only avenue for the Indian community to uplift itself.

"For instance, the government is devoting resources to Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia and Tekun Nasional, which provide assistance to the In-

dian community.

"This includes repairing sanitary infrastructure in Tamil schools."

He said there was no place for discrimination of any race in Malaysia, as achieving greater equality must be a central goal for Malaysians.

He said the country must stop bickering over petty issues, sowing the seeds of discord and hatred among races.

"If we want Malaysia to survive, we must go back to the core values and principles of humanity, justice and unity because those can ensure our success.

"If I'm given the confidence as prime minister, I will not compromise on making this a country for all Malaysians."

Page 1 pic: An anti-missile system operates after Iran launched drones and missiles, as seen from Ashkelon, Israel.



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DATUK SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM
prime minister