

M'sia backs Timor-Leste's Asean bid

PM reaffirms support as Anwar and Gusmao hold talks on regional issues

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia has expressed full support for Timor-Leste's accession as a permanent member of Asean, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia looks forward to welcoming Timor-Leste as a permanent member next year when the country assumes the chairmanship of the regional bloc.

"We will do whatever necessary to assist Timor-Leste so that the process can be further facilitated and accelerated," he told a joint press conference with his Timor-Leste counterpart Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao here yesterday, Bernama reported.

Gusmao, who assumed office in July last year, arrived on Sunday for his maiden visit to the country.

Anwar said Malaysia's full sup-

port on the matter was also conveyed to Gusmao during a bilateral meeting held earlier yesterday.

Timor-Leste is currently awaiting the consensus of Asean member states to be accepted as a full member of the regional bloc.

Timor-Leste was recognised as an Asean observer state and joined the Asean Regional Forum in 2005 before officially applying for membership on March 4, 2011.

In 2022, Asean leaders gathered at the 40th and 41st Asean Summits and Related Summits in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and agreed in principle for Timor-Leste to become the bloc's 11th member.

Timor-Leste has also been granted observer status to participate in all Asean meetings, including plenary sessions.

Meanwhile, Gusmao expressed

gratitude for Malaysia's commitment to supporting Timor-Leste's Asean accession during its chairmanship next year.

He said the partnership between the two nations underscored their shared commitment to peace, stability and development in the region.

"Talking about peace, stability and development, we also expressed our concerns about the continuing suffering of people in Ukraine and Gaza. Together, we will do everything to solve the problem," he said.

He emphasised the importance of dialogue, tolerance and adherence to international law, noting that while Ukraine's situation is often framed through international law, the plight of Palestinians in Gaza is ignored.

"Before and after Timor-Leste

joins Asean, together we will fight for peace in the world," said Gusmao.

In a joint statement, Malaysia expressed deep appreciation to Timor-Leste for gifting a parcel of land in Dili to develop its diplomatic premises.

Both leaders welcomed the signing of the Land Concession Agreement by the foreign ministers of both countries and Malaysia looks forward to commencing the development of the embassy complex at the earliest opportunity.

They addressed the escalating crisis in Myanmar, reaffirming their commitment to the Asean Leaders' Five-Point Consensus (5PC) as the guiding framework for resolving the political crisis.

They also discussed several regional issues, particularly

developments in the South China Sea, emphasising the importance of continued dialogue and peace resolutions based on international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982).

Anwar and Gusmao also expressed urgent concern over the ongoing conflict in Gaza, calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

They demanded Israel ensure unimpeded humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Both leaders reaffirmed their support for the setting up of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state, based on pre-1967 borders, Palestine's full United Nations membership and adherence to relevant UN resolutions.