

Act on Myanmar, says PM

Asean urged to address crisis causing loss of life, displacement

By TEH ATHIRA YUSOF
and M. IRSYAD
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: Ahead of Malaysia assuming the Asean chair, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has again called for an end to the violence and political marginalisation in Myanmar.

The Prime Minister emphasised the importance of compliance with the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) and stated Malaysia's commitment to working with other Asean member states and influential dialogue partners to push for peace, effective humanitarian mechanisms, and the eventual political engagement of all relevant stakeholders.

"A difficult challenge we must contend with is the crisis in Myanmar, given the scale of death, displacement and fighting.

"The message that Asean should convey must come from a unified voice.

"Failure to act, when there is ample cause to believe that a member state is violating the spirit of the Asean Charter, is a dereliction of our moral duty," he said in his keynote address at the 37th Asia-Pacific Roundtable, organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia here yesterday.

"This does not mean that we should not try multipronged, more creative tracks. The status quo is not static."

Anwar Ibrahim

Anwar said Asean must facilitate and offer assistance to Myanmar through various methods, but this could only be done when the various parties in the country are ready.

"But this does not mean that we should not try multipronged, more creative tracks. The status quo is not static.

"Among the various stakeholders in Myanmar, there are the nascent beginnings of long and difficult conversations about what the future of their country will look like.

"This includes the possibility of

a federation-like system. While it is not our place to decide what is best for the people of Myanmar, it is incumbent upon us, as friends and neighbours, to help facilitate what and where we can," he added.

Anwar also said that Malaysia will strive to lead with moral character, as stressed in the principles of Malaysia Madani, which entail a civil and inclusive approach that celebrates interconnectivity, as it takes over the chairmanship in 2025.

Malaysia has held the Asean chairmanship four times: in 1977, 1997, 2005 and 2015.

The 5PC was signed by Asean in 2021, among other calls for an immediate cessation of violence and the need instead for inclusive political dialogue.

During his speech, Anwar also said Malaysia will continue to stand for peace and progress while maintaining a strong and fruitful relationship with China and the United States.

He stressed that Malaysia would not stand for the violence happening in the world, naming the conflicts in Palestine, Ukraine and Myanmar, as well as the crises in Sudan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Haiti.

"We are fiercely independent. That is to say, we refuse to be defined by how major powers see

the world, and Malaysia will continue to strive for our national and strategic interests, defined on our own terms.

"Malaysia stands for peace and progress, fellow feeling, and above all, adherence to international law and cooperation," he added.

Anwar highlighted the 50th anniversary of Malaysia's diplomatic ties with China, the nation's largest trading partner, a key investor, and a close bilateral and multilateral partner, as well as the 10 years since Malaysia elevated its bilateral relationship with the United States to a comprehensive partnership.

"In this vein, Malaysia maintains a strong and fruitful relationship with both China and the United States.

"At the same time, we will continue to pursue productive and meaningful relations with our other partners - whether they be our longstanding strategic and comprehensive strategic partners or friends in the Global South," he added.