

Anwar pushes for immediate, permanent ceasefire in Gaza



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MELBOURNE: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, joined by the leaders of Australia and other Asean nations, yesterday called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

Speaking at the retreat session of the Asean-Australia Special Summit, Anwar said all Asean member states and Australia voted in favour of the United Nations General Assembly resolution in December, which demanded a humanitarian ceasefire.

"We should urge for this demand (for ceasefire in Gaza) to be realised, immediately and per-

manently," he said.

He added that Malaysia also implores the international community to take bolder actions to compel Israel's adherence to the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice in January and urge all parties to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza.

"I believe we can agree that all countries, without exception, are bound by international law. No country should be allowed to continue violating these laws with impunity. There should be no double standards."

Anwar added that the situation in Gaza continues to worsen.

"More than 30,000 Palestinian civilians have been killed, including more than 8,000 women and 12,000 children. Innocent babies are dying of starvation and famine appears imminent."

He said Malaysia also calls on countries not to prejudge the outcome of the investigation into the allegations involving several United Nations Relief and Works

Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) personnel and reconsider the collective punishment imposed.

Anwar said Asean and Australia can play a constructive role towards finding a durable solution to the conflict.

"The right to self-determination that we value for ourselves should also be protected and upheld for the Palestinians.

"The end of the decades-old Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories is fundamental for a viable two-state solution as well as peace in the Middle East.

"Israel's aggression has further exacerbated divisions and prejudices between Muslims and non-Muslims worldwide, fuelling the dangerous spread of Islamophobia, which must be stopped."

Earlier, Anwar outlined five areas of focus to further strengthen the close relationship between Asean and Australia, which has been established for 50 years. This includes economic cooper-

ation through the empowerment of the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) ecosystem.

Anwar said Malaysia sees significant potential for support from Australia to strengthen the Asean MSME ecosystem, particularly through digital transformation, capacity building, market access, sustainable practices,

and enabling equitable participation among MSMEs.

Anwar made these remarks during a plenary session titled "Review and Future Direction of Asean-Australia Dialogue Relations" at the Asean-Australia Special Summit at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre here.