

'Give lawmakers more space to express views'

VIENTIANE: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has called on parliamentary institutions of Asean member states to provide a broader platform for their members to express their views.

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul said Anwar raised the matter during the Asean Leaders' Interface with Representatives of the Asean Inter-parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) on Wednesday, held on the sidelines of the 44th and 45th Asean Summits and Related Summits here.

Johari, who represented the Malaysian Parliament during the closed-door session, said Anwar raised the matter to encourage Asean parliamentarians to share

new ideas to achieve the goal of becoming the world's fourth-largest economic bloc.

"Challenges outside Asean are mounting, but we should strengthen our position. With a population of 680 million, Asean's potential must be fully utilised," Johari told Malaysian media after the session.

Johari, who will assume the AIPA presidency on Oct 18, said the session also discussed the importance of maintaining good relations between Asean governments and their respective legislative bodies to ensure that the people's concerns are addressed by the executive level.

Regional security and cooperation were also discussed to reinforce Southeast Asia's position

as a peaceful and neutral zone.

"We talked about how to keep this region neutral, not siding with any particular power," Johari said, adding that the Myanmar crisis was discussed during the session.

On Malaysia's role as the 2025 Asean chair, Johari said the country should strive to leave a legacy to be proud of during its leadership of the bloc.

"We aim to be remembered as a chair that organised one of Asean's finest summits, and we hope Timor-Leste will be accepted as a full Asean member."

The 44th and 45th Asean Summits and Related Summits opened in the Laotian capital on Wednesday and will run until today. **Bernama**