

# Myanmar leaders extend truce to boost aid efforts

**BANGKOK:** Myanmar leaders have expressed their commitment to extending the ceasefire to allow the entry of humanitarian aid following the devastating earthquake last month.

This was conveyed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in two separate meetings here.

Anwar said he held a face-to-face meeting with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, chairman of the State Administration Council (SAC) of Myanmar, on Thursday afternoon.

He also held a virtual meeting yesterday morning with the leader of Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG), Mahn Win Khaing Than. The NUG is Myanmar's government in exile.

"I see a willingness (from Myanmar leaders) to continue the ceasefire, as it is a prerequisite for all humanitarian aid efforts.

"They mentioned the recent explosion incident. We hope it can be handled properly.

"Will there be further meetings (with Myanmar leaders)? Most likely, yes. We will continue with these negotiations."

Anwar said this at a press conference here yesterday after concluding his working visit to Thailand at the invitation of his Thai counterpart, Paetongtarn Shinawatra.

Present were Works Minister Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi, Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz, Foreign Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Amran Mohamed Zin and Malaysia's Charge d'Affaires to Thailand, Bong Yik Jui.

Anwar, who is finance minister, said he had conveyed to both

Myanmar leaders that a ceasefire was essential and humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach all parts of Myanmar, regardless of location or political affiliation, in line with Asean's position.

Min Aung Hlaing and Mahn Win Khaing Than have both given their assurance.

"Asean wants peace to be expedited. Asean wants to help rebuild Myanmar. Asean hopes that, if possible, Myanmar will return to the fold (Asean).

"These initial talks with SAC and NUG leaders were very successful."

He said Asean was ready to facilitate these efforts and engage with Myanmar's leaders.

He said Asean member states had already extended humanitarian assistance to support Myanmar's recovery.

He said Malaysia, for instance, deployed the Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (Smart) and had set up a field hospital.

"I will reach out to my Asean counterparts to inform them (of these developments) and to encourage the delivery of humanitarian aid."

Later in Putrajaya, Anwar said he would consult his Asean counterparts before hosting any meeting on Myanmar.

He said Asean's position on Myanmar was to have continuous engagement and inclusive discussions with all parties, as per the Five-Point Consensus.

He thanked the Myanmar leaders for their commitment to extending the ceasefire to allow the entry of humanitarian aid.

"I'm very happy and I must thank them," he said after the Finance Ministry's Hari Raya Aidilfitri open house.