

PM explains call for more Thai-Cambodia observers

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has defended Malaysia's call for additional Asean observers to monitor the ceasefire along the Thai-Cambodian border after acting Thai Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai publicly rejected the proposal.

Phumtham had described the proposal as interference in Thailand's border dispute with Cambodia.

Anwar said the proposal was in line with existing Asean agreements and was aimed at ensuring that monitoring missions remain effective and credible.

He said while certain locations such as Bangkok already have an adequate number of observers, other sites are under-staffed and require reinforcements to function properly.

"For example, in Bangkok we have 10 observers. But in another location, only two. So, we said the number needs to be increased," he said after closing the Asean Law Forum (ALF) 2025 yesterday.

Anwar said additional personnel would first be sourced from defence attaches and embassy staff already stationed in the respective

countries, before any reinforcements are called in from home bases.

He said this is not an unusual step but rather a practical solution to balance manpower needs across observer missions.

"There is no contradiction here. The statement simply says that we should start with embassy staff first," he said, adding that Malaysia is not seeking to deviate from the agreed Asean framework.

Phumtham had told Thai media that he had turned down the suggestion, stressing that the long-standing tensions along the Thai-Cambodian border were bilateral matters that should not be opened to external involvement.

"I told him that we don't allow outsiders to take part in the operations," said Phumtham.

He insisted that ceasefire monitoring should continue to be carried out by the Asean Interim Observer Team as mandated during the recent General Border Committee meeting in Malaysia.

Phumtham added that if additional observers were truly required, Asean states must rely on their existing military attaches or embassy staff from the eight Asean embassies in

Thailand rather than seek reinforcements from outside sources.

It was also reported that Cambodia had asked Malaysia to send more observers, claiming that Thai troops had attempted to provoke clashes along the border.

Meanwhile, Asean law ministers concluded the ALF with the signing of a joint declaration on strengthening international commercial arbitration and mediation.

The declaration reaffirmed Asean's commitment to upholding the rule of law, enhancing access to justice and supporting economic growth.

The ministers pledged to develop a robust regional framework for arbitration and mediation, aligning it with international conventions such as the New York Convention and the Singapore Convention on Mediation.

The declaration further underscored inclusivity, with ministers stressing that arbitration and mediation must remain accessible to businesses of all sizes and communities across Asean. - **By Qirana Nabilla Mohd Rashidi**