

**Ban Ki-moon Hails Efforts Of Asean In Democratising Myanmar**  
**Bernama**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 23 (Bernama) -- United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has hailed the efforts of Asean member countries, including Malaysia, in helping in the current democratisation process of Myanmar.

He described the democratisation of Myanmar as the right way as it would lead to greater participation in democracy and greater freedom of movement and speech.

After six decades of military dictatorship, Myanmar is fast moving towards greater democratisation under President Thein Sein. Myanmar will also call for by-elections on April 1 that will see former political detainee Aung San Suu Kyi taking part.

Myanmar has also invited teams from 25 countries and the European Union to monitor the special elections for 48 seats in the 664-member Parliament.

In an interview with Bernama at the end of his two-day visit to Malaysia yesterday, Ban also commended Asean countries for their contribution towards the resolution of disputes in the region.

He hailed Malaysia's strong role in being a third party facilitator in the territorial dispute between Thailand and Cambodia.

Malaysia, he said, also played a lead role in negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front with regard to Mindanao.

"These are some of the important areas that Asean countries have been helping the UN (in the resolution of conflicts)," he said.

As for Syria, Ban said the UN was determined to help the Syrian people to overcome their present crisis so that their genuine aspirations could be restored as soon as possible.

In the latest development surrounding Syria, the UN Security Council has passed a statement supporting former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan's peace plan for Syria, which also had the backing of both China and Russia for the first time.

The statement, which was approved by all 15 Security Council members, threatened Syria with unspecified "further steps" if it fails to comply with Annan's peace plan, which calls for a ceasefire and demands swift access for aid agencies to help the wounded.

Ban, when asked to list some of the successes that the UN had achieved after he succeeded Annan on Jan 1, 2007, said, "We have made many successes, but seen some failures (as well)."

He cited the UN's role last year in helping many people in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya realise their dreams and aspirations so that they could live with freedom of speech and association, and that their dignity was well protected.

Another example of success, Ban said was UN's ability to help the people of Cote D'Ivoire restore rightful democratic rights in April 2011 after months of fighting when the then incumbent president, Laurent Gbagbo, refused to step down despite losing to Alassane Ouattara in fair elections in late 2010.

With the help of the international community, the UN was able to restore order and Ouattara then took office on April 11 last year.

"This is one good example (of our work)," said Ban.

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