



Govt determined to safeguard Sabah rights

KOTA KINABALU: The federal government remains determined to safeguard Sabah's rights as the state is an integral part of Malaysia, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim asserted.

Speaking at the closing of the 2025 National Farmers, Breeders and Fishermen's Day yesterday, Anwar said the federal government will also continue to safeguard the nation's sovereignty against any form of intrusion, whether on land or at sea.

He emphasised that Malaysia is prepared to bring matters concerning Sabah's rights and the country's sovereignty to international court proceedings if necessary.

"Why are we doing this? Because this is our country – Sabah is part of Malaysia. We are spending tens of millions of ringgit, maybe a hundred million ringgit, to defend our rights. We will not allow even an inch of our land or sea to be encroached upon.

"Wherever it may be – in the Spanish courts or internationally – we will fight to the maximum to defend Sabah's rights because Sabah is part of Malaysia."

Also present were Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu and his deputy Datuk Seri Arthur Joseph Kurup.

Anwar said the government is committed to driving Sabah's development and resolving demands under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 through various initiatives and allocations, stressing that the relationship between the state and federal governments must remain strong.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said among the resolved matters is the interim special grant for Sabah, which has been increased from RM300 million to RM600 million this year, along with an allocation of RM10 billion to complete the Pan Borneo Highway in Sabah.

"It (Pan Borneo Highway in Sabah) was delayed under the previous government, but we are continuing it under the responsibility of the federal government. Maybe it's not visible yet, not completed, but at least we've approved it and the work packages are in progress."

Anwar also said the federal government has given full authority over electricity supply management to the state government, along with continuous subsidies for seven years until 2030 amounting to RM3.54 billion. – Bernama

PM calls for transparent probe into student's death

KOTA KINABALU: The death of student Zara Qairina Mahathir has drawn the attention of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who stressed that investigations must be conducted transparently and thoroughly.

The prime minister said he had discussed the matter with IGP Datuk Seri Mohd Khalid Ismail and Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution

Ismail to ensure the probe is conducted swiftly and comprehensively.

"There was a death recently, and the education minister (Fadhlina Sidek) is being attacked and accused of various things. What has become of our country? This death is not a trivial matter," he said during his speech at the closing of the National Farmers, Breeders and Fishermen Day 2025

yesterday.

Also present were Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor, Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu and his deputy Datuk Seri Arthur Joseph Kurup.

Anwar also reminded the public not to make speculations or accusations without evidence, emphasising that

Malaysia is a nation founded on the rule of law.

"This is a nation of law, not slander. Whoever is involved in a criminal act such as murder will not be protected."

Zara Qairina, 13, was believed to have fallen from the third floor and was found unconscious in a drain near her school dormitory in Papar, Sabah, at 4am on July 16. – Bernama

Experts divided over Bangladesh Asean bloc bid

■ BY HARITH KAMAL
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PETALING JAYA: Bangladesh's renewed bid to join Asean has divided opinion among Malaysian experts, with some warning of geopolitical fallout and others highlighting possible strategic and economic gains for Malaysia.

The proposal re-emerged after a meeting in Dhaka last week between PKR deputy president Nurul Izzah Anwar and Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus, who appealed for Malaysia's support for the South Asian nation's entry into the 10-member regional bloc. But analysts remain split on the viability of the move and its implications for Asean unity and Malaysia's national interests.

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research senior fellow Dr Azmi Hassan questioned the logic of including Bangladesh, noting that it lies well outside Asean's traditional geographic boundary.

"Compared with Timor-Leste, which is within the Asean region, Bangladesh is quite distant."

Azmi said a similar proposal to admit Papua New Guinea, supported by Indonesia at last year's Asean Summit, failed to

➤ Some cite geopolitical risks and regional misalignment while others see strategic and economic potential for Malaysia

gain traction.

"If Papua New Guinea didn't get support from Asean members, then even less so for Bangladesh," he said, adding that Dhaka's entry could stir geopolitical sensitivities involving both Pakistan and India.

"Among the 10 Asean member states, I doubt there would be much support for Bangladesh's inclusion.

"In contrast, Timor-Leste had strong backing from Malaysia and Thailand. For Bangladesh, I don't see any member likely to champion its entry."

On the other hand, International Islamic University Malaysia international law and relations expert Assoc Prof Dr Mohd Yazid Zul Kepli said Malaysia could stand to gain strategically from supporting Bangladesh's bid, particularly in trade, energy and maritime security.

"Economically, Malaysia could benefit from greater market access, increased investment flows and labour cooperation, given

Bangladesh's large workforce and growing economy."

Still, Mohd Yazid acknowledged the geopolitical risks, particularly the risk of India gaining indirect influence within Asean, which could complicate the bloc's relationship with China.

"Malaysia should navigate this by framing Bangladesh as a neutral economic partner and emphasising shared development goals."

He added that closer Asean ties could lead to better protections for Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia – one of the country's largest migrant groups – although any expansion must be approached with caution.

"Expanding Asean's size is not necessarily good. There should be in-depth analysis of the pros and cons."

Economist Prof Dr Geoffrey Williams offered a more critical perspective, warning that Asean is too fragmented to consider enlargement at this stage.

"Asean is not yet ready for

expansion and inclusion of unstable new members," he said, citing the unresolved tensions between Thailand and Cambodia.

Williams said Malaysia does not need Asean to deepen its ties with Bangladesh.

"Any economic benefits can be achieved through a free trade agreement with Bangladesh, covering the free movement of labour and capital and zero tariffs."

"Asean membership is not necessary."

He also dismissed the idea that the bloc would improve governance of regional labour migration.

"Improved labour mobility can happen if Malaysia removes the agency system and cuts corruption and vested interests."

Williams added that Asean's internal diversity – spanning absolute monarchies, military regimes and one communist one-party state – already presents significant obstacles to integration.

"Adding new countries will only make integration more difficult."

Asean has never yet admitted a country outside Southeast Asia. Timor-Leste remains the only non-member in the process of formal accession. Papua New Guinea, despite previous interest, has yet to garner sufficient support.

Thailand, Cambodia chose M'sia because of political stability: Anwar

KOTA KINABALU: Thailand and Cambodia chose Malaysia as the location for peace talks because the country has stable politics and a developing economy, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said as a friendly country, Malaysia is proud to be able to help resolve the conflict between the two Asian countries, thus ensuring that the region remains peaceful and stable.

Anwar said Cambodian Defence Minister General Tea Seiha and Thai Acting Defence Minister General Natthaphon Narkphanit are expected to arrive in Kuala Lumpur tomorrow to hold discussions in an effort to find a solution to the conflict between the two countries.

"We are proud as a friendly country and of Malaysia's success in resolving the discord between two Asian countries. Imagine, they agreed in Kuala Lumpur. For the first time, we have been able to reconcile the war

between two countries in Kuala Lumpur. *Alhamdulillah.*"

He said this when closing the 2025 National Farmers, Breeders and Fishermen's Day yesterday.

Also present were Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor, Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu and his deputy Datuk Seri Arthur Joseph Kurup.

On July 28, Thailand and Cambodia agreed to implement an immediate and unconditional ceasefire following a special meeting in Putrajaya chaired by Anwar as the current Asean chairman.

In the meeting, Thailand, represented by Acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai and Cambodia by its Prime Minister Hun Manet, also reached an agreement to hold a General Border Committee meeting as part of the ceasefire agreement.

Anwar said the success had made



Malaysia known on the world stage to the point of attracting the attention of global leaders including US President Donald J. Trump who contacted him

to express his appreciation for Kuala Lumpur's efforts to resolve the conflict.

In addition, Anwar said Malaysia

had also received attention and appreciation from leaders of other countries including Germany, France and other Asian countries. – Bernama

Anwar flanked by Hajiji (left) and Mohamad during the closing of the 2025 National Farmers, Breeders and Fishermen's Day yesterday in Kota Kinabalu. Also present was Kurup (right).
–BERNAMAPIC