

Asean meeting on Myanmar coup vital: Academic

KUALA LUMPUR: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) should urgently convene a special meeting to discuss the military coup in Myanmar, said an academician.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Department of Government and Civilisation's Prof Dr Zaid Ahmad said such a meeting is also necessary to focus on the possibility that the situation may get worse.

He said although Asean's foundation is based on the principle of non-interference, the recent political development in Myanmar can no longer be seen as an entirely internal matter as it involves other concerns such as regional security, stability and a humanitarian crisis.

"Since Asean has been institutionalised, it is a wise move to use the grouping as a platform to discuss matters of common concern," he told Bernama in an interview.

Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Indonesia President Joko Widodo had jointly called for Asean to convene a special meeting to discuss the political situation in Myanmar, following the military coup.

The leaders had made the call after a meeting in Jakarta last Friday in conjunction with Muhyiddin's official visit to Indonesia.



Myanmar National League for Democracy supporters giving a three-fingered salute in Kuala Lumpur yesterday in a demonstration against the recent military coup. – **AFPPIX**

"It is feared that the political upheaval in Myanmar can affect peace and stability in this region. In this regard, I fully agree with the suggestion that both foreign ministers be given the mandate to work out an understanding for a special Asean meeting to be held to discuss this matter more thoroughly," the prime minister had said.

Myanmar's military launched a coup on the morning of Feb 1, a day before Parliament was set to sit, and detained State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, President Win Myint, and other senior members of the National League for

Democracy (NLD).

The junta had also declared a one-year emergency and vowed to "take action" over alleged balloting fraud during the Nov 8 polls, which the NLD party won by a landslide.

Muhyiddin had also said that Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta viewed with serious concern the current political situation in Myanmar as it was a setback for the country's democratic process.

Asean security analyst Prof K. S. Nathan believes that diplomatic dialogue would be the most effective solution to end the crisis.

He said Asean can play a

constructive role by urging the junta and other key players in Myanmar's political sphere to return to talks.

"There needs to be a willingness for parties concerned in the country to talk and work for peaceful internal reconciliation.

"Yes, it is a long process but there is no short cut to it," said Nathan, who is also former director of the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Brunei, as this year's Asean chair, had called for dialogue, reconciliation and the return to normalcy.