

Despite boycott calls, Anwar to attend Apec meet

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Bernama

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim today decided to join the 2023 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Economic Leaders' Week in San Francisco, when there are calls for him not to attend.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said the decision to participate in the conference was to protect the country's interests from various angles of diplomatic, security and economic relations.

However, the Tambun MP insisted that he did not budge in defending justice and the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Realising the decision would not please all parties, Anwar hopes that he will not be labelled as being pro-Israel for attending the conference, which will be attended by all Asian member countries at the invitation of US President Joe Biden.

"For me, the priority is to maintain diplomatic relations and peace even if we

don't budge when it comes to justice and supporting the rights of the Palestinian people," he said when speaking at a gathering with the Finance Ministry staff today.

"As the prime minister, I want to look after the interests of this country, I want to look after its security, economy and prosperity," he said, admitting that there was pressure for him not to participate in Apec.

Apec is a regional economic forum established in 1989 to capitalise on the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific, and this year, it will take place in San Francisco from Nov 11 to 17.

All 21 Apec member economies account for nearly 40 percent of the global population, nearly 50 percent of global trade and more than 60 percent of US goods exports.

Apec members comprise Australia, Brunei, Canada; Chile, China; Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Taipei, Thailand, US and Vietnam.

Elaborating, Anwar said when it comes to Palestine, Malaysia's priority is for peace and humanitarian aid to assist those affected people in the country.

"Contact any big companies, find a way or add more funds to surpass RM100 million of the Humanitarian Trust Fund for the People of Palestine (AAKRP) collection. We will distribute and ensure that the shipment goes through a reliable body," he said.

The AAKRP fund, supervised by the Foreign Ministry, was established following the violent conflict and fighting in the Gaza Strip.

Don't politicise Palestinian struggle

Anwar, meanwhile, also urged all parties in this country not to politicise the Palestine-Israel issue.

"I see that sometimes, the polemics of parties and certain groups are quite extreme. It's okay, in this Gaza issue, let's work together, people are killed, small children die, think how to help together," he added.

The latest fighting in Palestine involving Hamas, the authorities in Gaza, and the Israeli regime since Oct 7, has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives.

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