

## **Engagement doesn't mean approval, says PM on South China Sea incident**

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**Bernama**

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim affirmed that Malaysia's commitment to maintaining engagement with all nations, including major powers, must never be misconstrued as tacit approval of any excessive or provocative actions.

This is particularly in sensitive theatres such as the South China Sea, Anwar said.

Addressing a question on the recent incident in which a Chinese military aircraft released flares perilously close to an Australian surveillance plane over disputed waters, he said Malaysia adopts a principled approach by voicing its concerns once the facts are fully verified, while continuing constructive dialogue with all parties involved.

"Now, once we establish the facts, we will raise this issue. Engagement does not mean condoning any excesses - the Chinese know that," he said at a joint press conference with his Australian counterpart, Anthony Albanese, after the Malaysia-Australia Third Annual Leaders' Meeting here today.

Anwar said that Malaysia, despite being a small nation, has the right to voice its views with wisdom and balance.

“In my private exchanges with United States President Donald Trump, I told him that we represent a very small country and a relatively small economy, but we still represent a nation - and we have the right to express our views.”

“Of course, we need the wisdom not to be seen as unnecessarily combative, but we should raise the issue once it is established,” he added.

At the same time, Anwar emphasised that Asean centrality must not translate into silence, arguing that regional nations have a responsibility to speak out on critical global and regional issues, from the crisis in Myanmar to the war in Gaza and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

“Centrality means that we do express our views. We have centrality, but we also engage on issues such as Myanmar, Gaza, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict,” said the prime minister.

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