

'We will protect our interests'

PM: Malaysia remains steadfast on South China Sea issue

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia remains consistent in its stand on protecting its sovereignty, rights and interests in the exclusive economic zones in South China Sea, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said Malaysia would persevere in the face of "all legitimate challenges and claims".

"In light of this, it bears stressing that Malaysia's security lies 'in' and 'with' the region and not 'from' the region.

"We leverage on our geographical location as both a land and maritime country straddling the most important trade routes and economic position as a key part of various global supply chains to promote regional security," he said in his keynote address at the 36th Asia-Pacific Roundtable here yesterday.

Anwar said Malaysia must continue to ride on its good relations with both China and the United States to promote a stronger rules-and-norms-based order.

"This order is not based on might or the tendency to ignore the very rules and norms one preaches about when it is inconvenient. That is unconducive and hypocritical.

"What's good for the goose



Nice to meet you: Anwar speaking with international delegates at the roundtable meeting in Kuala Lumpur. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

must be good for the gander. So, it must be an order based on fairness, respect and understanding, compassion and international law," he added.

Anwar assured delegates to the roundtable of the commitment from the United States and China to promote the rules-and-norms-based order.

"In our estimation, both China and the United States have affirmed their commitment to it. It must go beyond multilateral trade dealings to the realm of a practical geostrategic architecture.

"Malaysia will do our part to

promote this consensus," he added.

Anwar said it was imperative for such a consensus on global security to take into account the views of South-East Asia.

"Accordingly, Malaysia will engage proactively and independently with various initiatives by regional powers and stakeholders, in both the Asia and Indo-Pacific. We do so with a clear view of our national interest and priorities, which is deeply tied to the upkeep of inclusive regional architectures," he said.

Speaking on the impact of the intensifying rivalry between the

United States and China on South-East Asia, Anwar said it had affected the region's long-standing architecture and norms.

"Under the weight of such stresses, there is a drastic need to revitalise not just cooperation among nation states but greater inclusivity and equity.

"There seems to be no urgency to address this. Some have spoken of South-East Asia being a key part of the chessboard in the new 'Great Game' waged between Beijing and Washington, as the latter once did against Moscow.

"It would be a great loss for the entire region if this unfettered rivalry affects all that have been painstakingly achieved by existing and consequential Asean-led multilateral mechanisms," he said.

Also present at the event were Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir, Deputy Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Liew Chin Tong and Institute of Strategic and International Studies chairman Prof Dr Mohd Faiz Abdullah.