

M'sia will not 'punish' Hamas

PM: We only recognise sanctions by UN Security Council, not US

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia only recognises sanctions by the United Nations Security Council and not unilateral sanctions by the United States, which had introduced a Bill to penalise foreign countries supporting Palestinian group Hamas, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia disagreed with the US move to introduce sanctions against countries providing financial and munitions support to Hamas.

"Putrajaya does not recognise the decision of any countries, including the United States, to

introduce unilateral sanctions. We only recognise the UN Security Council.

"We disagree with the United States and, secondly, it will not affect our policies and decision," Anwar said during the Prime Minister's Question Time in Parliament yesterday.

He said he had spoken to leaders of several countries, including Islamic countries, and they all shared the same, stance of not recognising the US Bill.

"We will maintain relations with Hamas and will not punish the group as terrorists," said Anwar.

He said although Malaysia was not a signatory to the Rome Statute, it would support any countries that want to refer Israel to the International Court of Justice.

"We have to support the Palestinian cause so that Malaysians and the world know that Malaysia unanimously backs Palestine," added Anwar.

The United States is Malaysia's third-largest trading partner, after China and Singapore. US foreign direct investment in Malaysia was US\$13.2bil in 2022.

On Nov 1, the US House of Representatives passed a Bill to

sanction foreign supporters of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement.

Titled the Hamas International Financing Prevention Act, it was passed after 363 congressmen voted in favour of the Bill, while 46 members were against it.

The Bill will allow the United States to sanction foreign supporters of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

It will require the US president to periodically report to the Congress a list of foreign individuals who knowingly provide support or services to a senior member or supporter of Hamas

and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The US president will also be required to furnish the Congress with a list of any foreign governments that have repeatedly provided material support for the two groups in Palestine.

Governments, if found to be supporting the two Palestinian outfits, will be barred from receiving US assistance or the exports of controlled munitions for one year.

International financial institutions will also be instructed to stop providing assistance to these governments for a year.