

PM to attend Apec summit

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has decided to join the 2023 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Economic Leaders' Week in San Francisco, although there have been calls for him not to attend.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said the decision to participate in the conference is to protect the country's interests in terms of diplomatic and economic relations as well as security.

He added that he would not budge in defending justice and the Palestinian people's struggle for their rights.

Anwar expressed hope that he would not be punished as being pro-Israeli for attending the conference, which would be attended by all Asian member countries at the invitation of US President Joe Biden.

"For me, the priority is to

> Decision to participate in conference made to protect national interests concerning diplomatic, economic relations and security

maintain diplomatic relations and peace," he said at a gathering of staff of the Finance Ministry yesterday.

"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 the conference.

Apec is a regional economic forum established in 1989 to capitalise on the growing interdependence of countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and this year, it will be held from Nov 11 to Nov 17

All 21 Apec member countries

account for nearly 40% of the global population, nearly 50% of global trade and more than 60% of US exports.

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

Anwar said the priority of Malaysia for Palestine is peace as well as humanitarian aid to assist the affected people of the country.

"Contact big companies, find a

way or add more funds to surpass the RM100 million of the Humanitarian Trust Fund for the People of Palestine collection. We will distribute and ensure that the shipment goes through a reliable body."

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

Anwar asked all parties in the country not to politicise the Palestine-Israel issue.

"I see that sometimes, the polemics of parties and groups are quite extreme. It's okay.

"In this Gaza issue, let us work together. People are killed, small children die, think of how to help together."

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