

'US equally important ally as reliable friend China'

SAN FRANCISCO: Malaysia is not tilting towards China but the country is geographically close and a reliable friend and ally, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Economic Leaders' Meeting here.

He said the US is equally important and a traditional ally, as well as a major investor that has helped to propel Malaysia's economy.

"Cumulatively, the US stands as number one in terms of our total investments but increasingly, China has become one of the major investors," he said during a question

> Both countries are major investors that have helped to propel Malaysia's economy, says Anwar

and answer session at the University of California in Berkeley on Tuesday.

Alan P. Bedford endowed chair and political science director of Berkeley Apec Study Centre Prof Dr Vinod Aggarwal was the moderator of the one-hour question and answer session, Bernama reported.

"China is our neighbour, an

important country and has matured in terms of its economic vibrancy and we would benefit immensely as we continue to engage with it.

"So, I think my point is this, that while we have to listen to big powers, they also have to engage and listen to the views and expression of our country. We, as a

developing and emerging economy, need to engage and decide what is best for our country."

On Malaysia and more broadly Asean's role in the South China Sea, Anwar said Asean did discuss its position.

"Ideally, we should take a multilateral regional position in this engagement with China.

"In the map, as announced recently by China, it does infringe upon our territory or claim, but this falls with China, we have been rather successful in terms of negotiating with the Chinese."

Anwar believes that the problem is more troublesome and contentious with the Philippines and Vietnam.

"We are engaging with them too, but our position is to make sure it remains a regional problem. Do not allow for the ferrous of other countries because that would further aggravate or exacerbate the crisis.

"The solution, of course, is aggressive diplomatic engagement, which we are continuing even within Asean, as I said, with the Philippines and Vietnam, but together, Asean and China.

"The meeting is being looked upon not only by Apec member economies but also the world.

"The engagement (could result in some) resolutions. Not necessarily contentious problems of Gaza, Palestine or Ukraine, Russia.

"But at least trade investments and understanding on these related issues would help instil more confidence into the economy which is required by not only the US and China but most of the countries."

He said better ties between China and the US would mean immense benefits for Asean countries, including Malaysia.



Anwar fielding questions during the session at the University of California. - **BERNAMAPIC**