



Datuk Seri
Anwar
Ibrahim

2023 CHINA STANDARD MAP

'CHINA SAYS IT WILL RESPECT CLAIMS OF OTHERS'

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Anwar says he is reassured that Beijing will meaningfully engage Malaysia in South China Sea dispute

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THE Chinese government will “honour and respect” the claims of others in the South China Sea dispute, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

This was amid rising tension over Beijing’s purported 2023 China Standard Map, which laid claim to sovereignty of about 90 per cent of the South China Sea, including the waters off Sabah and Sarawak.

Anwar, in a recent interview

with American news magazine *Time*, said he had publicly raised the matter with Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the Asean East Asia Dialogue last month.

“I was one of the few Asean leaders who said it publicly in front of Premier Li Qiang in the Asean East Asia Dialogue.

“But to me, what is reassuring is the categorical statement by Li that they will honour and respect the claims of others.”

He said the Royal Malaysian Navy had frequently raised objections when it identified anything it considered an incursion, although China also claimed that

it was their territory.

“But thus far, when things are raised, or a polite note of concern is expressed, they do not necessarily withdraw, but at least give some deference or consideration.

“Which means they do not, for example, aggressively enter our waters.

“When we identify cases of them entering our waters and give a note of protest, then they have steered away from the area on a number of occasions.”

During the Asean Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia recently, Anwar voiced the need to resolve the standard map issue peacefully and rationally based on the law.

The map was released on Aug 28 by China’s Natural Resources Ministry in conjunction with the country’s National Mapping Awareness Week and Survey and Mapping Publicity Day.

On Aug 31, Malaysia’s Foreign Ministry said it would send a formal protest note to China regarding the delineations of the South China Sea according to the map it released.

In the interview, Anwar also described China as an “important neighbour” and an “important trading nation”, adding that the country had responded favourably to Malaysia’s engagements despite the issues that both countries faced.

To a question on how the Malaysian government would respond to the United States’ request to pick a side, he said: “We do have issues (with China) like the South China Sea, but the engagement has been working, in the sense that we have stated our position, and I’m reassured by China that it would not do anything without meaningful ex-

changes and dialogues.

“At the same time, the US is a longtime ally and friend, and we continue to engage with them. But we cannot be intimidated in any way.”

An example of this, he said, was the implementation of the 5G network in Malaysia, where the government had chosen Chinese tech giant Huawei to participate in the infrastructure rollout, apart from Swedish telecommunications giant Ericsson.

“My position is to continue it because it is an important technology.

“But why shouldn’t we utilise the best of both worlds? So we also chose Huawei to participate.

“Of course, this displeased some people. But I can’t help it. My commitment and loyalty are to the people of Malaysia,” he said.