

# M'sia to continue oil exploration in South China Sea

PUTRAJAYA remains firm in its territorial claims in the South China Sea and will continue its oil exploration activities despite China's objections, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said while Malaysia maintains its stance, it remains open to dialogue and negotiations with any country involved.

"Our approach aligns with Asean's principle of centrality, advocating for resolution through discussions and dialogues.

"Malaysia will not back down from its claims. That is why the exploration by PETRONAS continues, even though objections

have been raised by China," he said during the Prime Minister's Question Time.

Anwar said the territorial dispute also involved several other neighbouring countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei.

"That's why we don't agree if this problem is focused on China alone," he said in response to a supplementary question by Datuk Seri Takiyuddin Hassan (PN-Kota Baru).

However, the Prime Minister assured that Malaysia's firm stance would not hinder diplomatic relations, trade or friendships with the affected countries.

Takiyuddin had earlier asked Anwar to explain the approaches and strategies for leveraging diplomatic channels through Asean chairmanship in disputes over the South China Sea.

Anwar also reiterated Malaysia's stance on its territorial waters, emphasising that the country would protest and oppose any unauthorised use of its waters as a defence route.

Addressing the Code of Conduct (COC) discussions in the recent Asean meeting attended by representatives from the United States, China, Japan, South Korea and Asean member countries, he stressed the importance of linking

dialogue to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

"The UN agreement binds everyone, and I observed that China's response is in agreement with the UNCLOS framework," he said.

The South China Sea has become a source of contention in the region, with China claiming nearly the entire area, despite Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Brunei having overlapping maritime claims.

In March this year, it was reported that the second reading of the COC was completed, and it is now into the third reading.