

ESCALATING BORDER DISPUTE

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pg. 2

'Thailand-Cambodia peace is the only option'

PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has voiced concern over the ongoing border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia, saying peace is the only option.

He said he had already sent messages to both the Cambodian and Thai prime ministers.

"This development is concerning. They are important members of Asean and close to Malaysia.

"I have sent messages to both prime ministers and look forward to speaking with them this (yesterday) evening.

"At the very least, we hope they will stand down and try to negotiate. They have tried (to negotiate), but I still think peace is the

only option," he said after attending the Asean Semiconductor Summit here yesterday.

Present were Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz and Human Resources Minister Steven Sim.

Asked how the dispute might affect trade within Asean, Anwar said it was premature to draw conclusions, saying the situation was temporary.

He said both Thailand and Cambodia had their nations' best interests at heart and were seeking a peaceful resolution.

On whether there would be a stern warning issued in his capacity as Asean chair, Anwar said no.

He added that Malaysia hoped to engage both leaders and express its views.

On comments that no Asean country has stepped forward to mediate, Anwar said, "No, I had initial discussions with both prime ministers last month, and we've since sent messages to them.

"I look forward to speaking with them again later," he said.

Thailand launched an airstrike while Cambodia fired rockets and artillery, killing a civilian, in an escalation of the border dispute.

The clash centres around the Emerald Triangle, a border area shared by Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, which houses several ancient temples.