

'Malaysia relies on legal frameworks to address maritime border issues with Indonesia'

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JAKARTA: Malaysia has never adopted an aggressive stance in addressing maritime border issues with Indonesia, including the long-standing Ambalat dispute, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

At a dialogue with members of the Malaysian Indonesian Journalists Association and chief editors of major Indonesian media outlets yesterday, Anwar said Malaysia remains committed to legal frameworks and diplomatic negotiations.

"With regard to the Ambalat issue (in the Sulawesi Sea), we follow the legal path. We do not take an aggressive stance. Both sides must avoid encroaching into each other's territory."

Anwar, is on a working visit to Indonesia, accompanied by federal and state leaders, including Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Openg and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor, whose presence, he said, is meant to facilitate discussions with Indonesia, particularly on matters involving East Malaysia.

The Ambalat dispute involving overlapping maritime claims in the Sulawesi Sea between East Kalimantan

(Indonesia) and southeastern Sabah (Malaysia) has persisted since Malaysia published a map of its maritime boundaries in 1979.

Tensions peaked in 2005, prompting the formation of the Malaysian Indonesian Journalists Association, a bilateral media initiative composed of top editors from both nations, to help promote constructive narratives and reduce friction over sensitive bilateral issues.

According to a written reply on the Malaysian Parliament portal dated July 22, the Foreign Ministry said the ND6 and ND7 oil exploration blocks, which are part of the area Indonesia refers to as Ambang Batas Laut or "Ambalat", fall within Malaysian sovereign territory under international law.

It said Malaysia's stance is rooted in international legal principles, including the 2002 ruling by the International Court of Justice concerning nearby territorial disputes, *Bernama* reported.

"In this regard, the reference to 'Ambalat' for parts of the blocks is inaccurate and misleading. Therefore, the correct term for the area in question, in line with Malaysia's position, is the Sulawesi Sea."



Anwar being received by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto ahead of their bilateral meeting at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta on July 29.

— AFP/IC