



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim delivering his special address at the 22nd Shangri-La Dialogue 2025 in Singapore yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE

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PM: EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

Malaysia encourages dialogue to preserve stability on which region depends, says Anwar

KUALA LUMPUR

MALAYSIA has urged all parties involved in the South China Sea dispute to exercise restraint and refrain from actions that could escalate tensions.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the issue would be best addressed through steady and principled diplomacy — quiet where necessary, but always firm.

“Malaysia remains deeply concerned about the potential for escalation among the claimants in the South China Sea.

“We have no desire to see tensions spiral into confrontation, especially in waters so critical to our security and prosperity.

“That is why we will continue to engage all parties calmly, directly and consistently.

“We will urge restraint, encourage dialogue and work to preserve the stability on which this region depends.

“Above all, we remain steadfast in our principled insistence that all parties uphold the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).”

He said this during his address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, titled “Holding Our Ground: Southeast Asia in a Fractured World”.

He also made clear that Malaysia rejected the concept of spheres of influence, adding that history had shown such divisions often silenced smaller nations.

“Stability does not come from carving up the map, but from creating space for all to participate meaningfully in shaping the global order.

“Our approach is one of active non-alignment. We will engage all who are willing — major powers and middle powers alike — not to pit one against another, but to maximise our own strategic space.

“Indeed, while we welcome a strong and enduring United States presence in the region as a force for peace, we equally value our vibrant and firm relations with China, as well as our robust partnerships across Asia, Europe, and the Global South.

“What Southeast Asia needs is a dynamic equilibrium that fosters cooperation without coercion, and balance without bloc politics.

“For Malaysia, this is a deliberate and strategic stance: to help preserve an open region, to assert our sovereignty, and to make our own choices — on our own terms.”

The three-day 22nd Shangri-La Dialogue, which began on Friday, features participation from 47 countries, including 40 ministerial-level delegates, 20 chiefs of defence forces, more than 20 senior defence officials and leading academics from across the region.

Meanwhile, Anwar said that he met US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth on the sidelines of the Dialogue, and they discussed enhancing defence and maritime cooperation.

“I also thanked the US for participating in the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition,” he said in a Facebook post.

Separately, Anwar also met Boeing Global president Brendan Nelson.

“We discussed maritime security, asset modernisation and collaboration with local industries.

“We also identified opportunities for training and for developing a robust Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) ecosystem.”

He said the discussions underscored Malaysia’s growing strategic importance in defence.