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CLIENT:	DSA EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE		
PUBLICATION:	THEEDGEMARKETS.COM	SECTION:	NEWS
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URL:	https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/malaysia-raises-south-china-sea-rohingya-issues-during-admm-meeting		



Malaysia raises South China Sea, Rohingya issues during ADMM meeting

BANGKOK (Nov 18): The South China Sea and Rohingya refugees were among issues raised by Malaysia during the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM Plus here.

Malaysia, represented by Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu at the ADMM retreat yesterday, emphasised the need for ADMM to strengthen and deepen relations, as well as, address the wide spectrum of non-traditional security challenges including the emerging of cybersecurity.

“The minister also expressed his concerns on the situation in Myanmar’s Rakhine state. He cautioned that the current situation must be addressed judiciously to avoid fleeing of Rohingyas to neighbouring countries including Malaysia, and preventing them from succumbing to extremist ideologies and recruitment due to their sufferings,” the ministry said in a statement here today.

During the 6th ASEAN Plus Meeting today, Mohamad addressed the complexity of geopolitics arising in the South China Sea.

He emphasised the need for all 10 ASEAN member countries and eight dialogue partner countries, namely Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, and United States to respect and adhere to the commitment made at the 5th ADMM Plus Meeting last year.

“All parties must exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities (in disputed the South China Sea) and avoid actions that may further complicate the existing situation,” he said.

In line with Thailand’s theme ‘Sustainable Security’ for its chairmanship this year, Mohamad encouraged ADMM Plus members to embrace the theme as an enduring vision of bringing peace, security, and stability to the region with respect to ASEAN shared interest and centrality as the key guiding principles.

Earlier today, Mohamad attended the opening ceremony of a defence exhibition — Defence and Security 2019 at IMPACT Exhibition and Convention Centre in Nonthaburi.

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He also officiated the Malaysian Pavilion at the exhibition. It is Malaysia's effort to develop and promoting defence industry in the region.

During the event, he took the opportunity to promote the 17th Defense Services Asia Exhibition and Conference (DSA 2020) and National Security (NATSEC), which will be held in Kuala Lumpur next year.

Five Malaysian companies from sectors namely aerospace, ICT, telecommunications, security systems and weaponry, participated in the exhibition to promote Malaysian industry players and products on the world stage.

Meanwhile, the ministry said Mohamad's attendance was part of Malaysia's defence diplomacy initiative to promote positive defence relations through multilateral and bilateral platforms in addressing regional and international defence and security issues of common concerns.

"This also highlights Malaysia's continuous commitment towards ASEAN as the core regional platform for regional cooperation," it said.

The statement said Malaysia congratulated Thailand as ASEAN Chair for its tremendous efforts in hosting the meetings and contributions towards a better ASEAN.

"Malaysia welcomes Vietnam as the incoming ASEAN Chair 2020," it said.

Malaysia and South Korea will co-chair the ADMM-PLUS Experts' Working Groups (EWG) on security from 2020-2023.

Previously, Malaysia co-chaired the ADMM-Plus EWG on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief with the United States from 2017-2020. — *Bernamea*