



## RMN SEA POWER CENTRE ONLINE COMMENTARY ON MARITIME ISSUES

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### MARITIME MUTUAL SUPPORT IN PEACE TIME

*By: Maritime Affairs, RMN Sea Power Centre*

The RMN is continuing its efforts and committed to resume all regular physical interaction with the world navies as it embraces the new reality. With the transition of the pandemic into the new phase of endemic, we have learned a lot of lessons from this experience. One for sure is that mitigating the pandemic needs a commonality of purpose from all of us as a regional entity. It has underscored that for our region to be grounded in resilience and sustainability, we must work closely.

As Malaysia is a “bridging linchpin” between two regions: the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean, the RMN believe in **DIME** which comprises of Diplomacy, Information, Military and Economy. Thus, post to the pandemic focus should now be shifted on it, to swiftly reinforce the MDA for maritime security, safety and the protection of maritime interests including the freedom of navigation and maritime trades.

**DIPLOMACY.** The Royal Malaysian Navy has always values and rather aggressively pursues constructive interactions to build mutual trust. In fact, Malaysia's strength is much dependent in our investments into foreign engagements as we believe in promoting cooperation that would encourage reciprocity and manifest our standing towards regional security. As represented in the Malaysian Defence White Paper, fostering 'Credible Partnership' in Strategic Defence encompasses international relationship through defence diplomacy concept and capacity building arrangement. Key platforms in the MDA architecture such as the Navy-to-Navy Talks (N2N Talks), KLE, ASEAN Defence Minister Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus), ASEAN Navy Chiefs' Meeting (ANCM) and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) continues to promote open and constructive dialogue on maritime domain security issues. Concurrently, the pandemic made bilateral and multilateral collaboration more significant for the international community.

**INFORMATION.** Achieving awareness will require maritime actors overcoming the traditional culture of secrecy and becoming more transparent. Regional collaboration such as the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) proves to be practical and effective, serving as the regional information-sharing hub covering most of the Indo-Pacific region. Given appropriate security permissions, sharing of data, analysis and operating pictures will:

- a. Improves the maritime safety and commerce,
- b. Help focus scarce enforcement resources in the most important areas,
- c. Foster "unity of effort" in pursuit of our mutual goals and interests through proactive, aggressive information exchange.

**MILITARY.** Reduction in military forces deployment will impact diplomatic and regional cooperation, impacting response capabilities against threats in the Area of Interest (AOI) or regional order. Therefore, enhancing existing naval cooperation and collaboration in exercise, training and operation such as Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) Bersama Series, Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP) and the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA) are key component aspects to maintain stability, sovereignty and security in the maritime domain of this region.

**ECONOMY.** A robust economy with unrestricted access to international markets and resources is a key driver of social progress and a need for a powerful national defence. However, the pandemic has affected the world economy, hence, triggering the issue of survival among the population. While waiting for global economy to recover and overcoming our current budget constrain, naval cooperation is key to:

- a. Enhance resource optimization to cover the vast AOI or maritime domain,
- b. Facilitate safer maritime routes for trade or traders,
- c. Prevent or reduce illegal activities in the maritime environment.
- d. Re-programming the resource allocation mechanism to increase the efficiency of budget generation and budget execution capabilities.

To conclude, a dynamic and expanding cooperation is essential. Therefore, Malaysia will continue to explore in these four aspects in order to collaborate and support other friendly nations especially its closest neighbours, the ASEAN countries. As a maritime society, navies must continue to cooperate, have mutual respect, exchange experiences, and explore new ways to address maritime domain challenges. Building and achieving collective resilience in these hard times will need a well-coordinated effort. The depletions of mutual supports and lack of maritime cooperation will decrease naval capacity and weaken joint threat response capability, making the maritime domain vulnerable to future threat. Hence, we need to reorient our response strategies to fulfil our roles and missions together.