



RMN SEA POWER CENTRE ONLINE COMMENTARY ON MARITIME ISSUES

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RMN ROLES IN DEALING WITH THE CURRENT MARITIME SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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Flanked by the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean on one side and the Straits of Malacca and Indian Ocean on the other, Malaysia is a bridging linchpin between the two ocean regions and between the continental north and maritime south. This unique location allows Malaysia to connect and build cooperation across nations, but also exposes Malaysia to a variety of challenges. Three challenges are especially significant: The growing tensions in the South China Sea; illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing; and non-traditional security concerns, such as illegal migration, human smuggling, and maritime piracy.

As guardian of the nation on the maritime front, the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) vigilantly protects Malaysia's interests from these and other maritime menaces. The RMN does so via concentric deterrence, comprehensive defence, and credible partnerships. This three-pillar defence strategy, as outlined in Malaysia's inaugural Defence White Paper in 2019, has been pursued by the Malaysian Armed Forces through collective action with other domestic agencies as well as external partners in an active, impartial, and inclusive manner.

In the South China Sea, the continuing projection of power, the construction of new realities, and the increased presence of warships pose formidable challenges to Malaysia. The trends risk turning this region into a flashpoint. Sandwiched between the big powers' action-reaction, Malaysia walks a tightrope to preserve security, while maintaining sovereignty, autonomy, and prosperity. Neutrality remains Malaysia's fundamental principle, but the nation must recalibrate its policies according to prevailing needs. Correspondingly, the RMN will enhance partnerships with likeminded nations to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight in the maritime commons, emphasize respect for international law, and embrace policies that avoid polarization, provocation, and escalation.

The RMN is also stepping up efforts to tackle IUU fishing. The RMN will undertake multilevel collective action to combat IUU, as countering this menace is key to ensuring a sustainable future for Malaysian fisheries and good order at sea. The RMN will take similar national, regional, and multilateral efforts to combat irregular migration and human trafficking.

Growing challenges at sea and other domains require multilevel cooperation on the basis of credible partnerships, inclusive initiatives, and dynamic coexistence. At a time when the world is experiencing intensified geopolitical rivalries and uncertainties, it is imperative for Malaysia and its partners to collaborate and combine the strengths to pursue shared security and sustainable peace. The RMN will meet the challenges in safeguarding the nation's maritime borders.

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