

'We should find our own solutions'

SOVEREIGNTY: If outsiders get involved, the region could become an international wrestling ground, China's ambassador to Asean Tong Xiaoling tells Santha Oorjitham in an email interview



A crew member of a fishing boats disembarking at a pier in Masinloc town, Zambales province, 230km from Scarborough Shoal after he and other protesters decided to postpone their trip to the disputed area. AFP pic

Question: What is China's position on Myanmar as it opens up and attempts to rejoin the international community?

Answer: As a friendly and close neighbour with more than 2,000km of common border, China wishes to see stability and development continue in Myanmar more than any other country. It has been China's consistent position to call for respect for the development path chosen by the Myanmar people and early and comprehensive lifting of sanctions against the country. China is willing to work with the rest of the international community to play a constructive role in helping Myanmar achieve stability and development.

Question: How would you describe relations between China and the United States in Asia-Pacific?

Answer: China welcomes the US to play a constructive role in the region, and the US has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to stronger cooperation with China in the region.

The two sides launched the consultation mechanism on Asia-Pacific affairs in May last year. Both sides reached much common ground on issues, including China-US relations in Asia-Pacific, their respective Asia-Pacific policies, regional hot spots and multilateral mechanisms.

Naturally, China and the US do not agree with each other on all issues. China believes that the majority of the Asia-Pacific countries are now most concerned about maintaining economic prosperity, strengthening regional cooperation and achieving common development.

There are security challenges to the region. But Asia-Pacific enjoys stability on the whole, which renders it inappropriate to highlight military and security agenda, enhance military presence and reinforce security alliances.

China is open to regional cooperation mechanisms and rules, which should be decided jointly by all the countries in this region. China looks forward to exploring a proactive model of interaction that promotes mutually beneficial cooperation and properly handles differences with the US.

Question: How do you see the relations between China and Asean in the present climate of economic uncertainty?

Answer: East Asia today has maintained fairly fast economic growth and social stability. It is one of the most dynamic regions with the biggest potentials. Free trade agreement development, sustainable development, connectivity, maritime cooperation, social and people-to-people exchanges will be the priorities for China-Asean cooperation. China will, as always, support Asean community building and Asean's leading role in East Asia cooperation.

Global challenges such as food, energy and environmental issues are posing increasing threats to sustainability of humanity. Against this backdrop, no single region or nation could remain unaffected in a globalised world. China and Asean will seize the opportunity, enhance cooperation against the challenges as masters of our own destinies, and advance the strategic partnership between us.

Question: What feedback has China received on Asean leaders' discussion on the South China Sea issue at the recent Phnom Penh summit?

Answer: The South China Sea issue involves disputes between China and some other countries of the South China Sea over territorial sovereignty and maritime jurisdiction. It's not a dispute between China and Asean. Direct negotiations between countries to the dispute is the best way to settle it. This is also confirmed in the Declaration of Conduct (DOC) signed by China and Asean member states.

If countries or international organisations that are not parties to disputes in the South China Sea were to get involved in settling the disputes or even become referees, it would only turn this region into an international political wrestling ground, create more complexity and affect peace and stability in the South China Sea.

Question: Asean leaders have agreed to work on common elements of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, aimed at creating a rules-based framework, and that there should not be any interference from outside parties. What is China's stand on this?

Answer: China is ready to work with Asean on discussions about the COC, and has exchanged views on questions concerned. In order to enhance communication and build consensus, China has proposed the creation of a group of eminent persons or experts on COC discussion.

Disputes over the South China Sea should be settled peacefully through friendly consultations and negotiations by sovereign states directly involved. This is a major consensus reached by China and Asean countries in the DOC. The DOC and COC are not dispute-settlement mechanisms. Rather, they are confidence-building measures intended for greater cooperation and mutual trust as well as peace and stability in the South China Sea. Any discussion on the COC formulation has to involve China from the very beginning. China cannot accept any draft of the COC that is imposed upon her.

Question: Is the Asean Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) a duplication of the Asean Regional Forum and why (or why not?)

Answer: ARF is a platform for political and security dialogue and cooperation with the largest membership in Asia-Pacific. We hope that the ARF could further increase political and security mutual trust among parties concerned through dialogue on security issues of shared interest, greater participation of defence officials, and confidence-building measures projects in disaster relief, maritime safety and other pragmatic cooperation on this platform.

The ADMM+, on the other hand, is an important platform for pragmatic cooperation in security and defence between Asean and its full dialogue partners. China hopes that all parties could make full use of this platform to conduct in-depth security dialogue and practical cooperation to enhance capabilities to tackle security threats and promote stability and prosperity in the region.

Ambassador Tong Xiaoling will be a speaker at the 26th Asia-Pacific Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur

Violence not the way to resolve conflicts, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has called on Asian countries to reject the use of force and violence in resolving conflicts.

Najib conceded that while the right to self-defence was permitted under the UN Charter, he pointed out that history was replete with instances of wars fought under the guise of self-defence.

"While it is difficult to ascertain the underlying reasons for an arms build-up, it is critical that mechanisms and structures are in place to ensure that this region never displays the proclivity to the extreme action of taking up arms," he said in his keynote address at the 26th Asia Pacific roundtable last night.

Present at the event were Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia chairman Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan and its chief executive, Datuk Dr Mahani Zainal Abidin.

Najib said because the stakes were high, Asians could not leave the protection of the region's peace and security to chance.

"We have to take proactive steps towards the construction of a pluralistic security community in which

the use of force is not an option."

He said Asians could not rely merely on pronouncements of friendship and peaceful intent, but need to work through problems and accommodate diverging interests.

"A good starting point would be to forge a common vision for the region. What is the preferred regional order? How do we institutionalise our strong bilateral and multilateral bonds of partnership and friendship into workable arrangements that are nimble enough to accommodate diverging interests without sacrificing organisational efficacy?"

As such, Najib said he was looking forward to the East Asia Vision Group II final report which would be submitted to the 15th Asean+3 summit in November.

Najib also called on Asian countries to "mainstream" the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM) around the world after finding out GMM had received encouraging response from the international community.

He said Malaysia had initiated a GMM Foundation, which was based in the city in January this year. The foundation was currently fully operational.

May 29, 2012

Force not an option to end conflicts, Asian nations told

KUALA LUMPUR: Reject the use of force and violence in resolving conflicts, [Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak](#) tells Asian countries.

He told participants of the 26th Asia-Pacific Roundtable that pro-active measures needed to be taken to make Asia realise the importance of safeguarding regional peace.

“Granted the right to self-defence is permitted under the UN Charter. However, it bears reminding that history is replete with instances of wars fought under the guise of self-defence.

“It is critical that mechanisms and structures are in place to ensure this region will never display the proclivity to the extreme action of taking up arms.

“We cannot leave the protection of the region’s peace and security to chance. We have to take pro-active steps towards the construction of a pluralistic security in which the use of force is not an option,” he said in his keynote address at the event’s launch last night.

Najib said a good starting point would be to forge a common vision for the region.

Themed “Asian Security Order and Governance”, the forum, which will end tomorrow, features prominent speakers from around the region.

Thursday May 31, 2012

Transparency in a government has its limits, says Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR: There should be limits to transparency in a government, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Mahathir, who spoke at the 26th Asia-Pacific Roundtable here yesterday, told reporters after his session that transparency by governments was a “new concept”.

“There are certain things you just cannot tell people until the right time,” he said, adding that leakages of certain information could adversely affect the implementation of government policies.

He said if governments really wanted to be transparent, they should invite the public to listen in to Cabinet meetings.

During his presentation titled *Governance In Asia: What's Best and What Works*, Dr Mahathir said absolute democracy that came with a lot of freedom could be-come destructive.

“Today’s democracy is not democratic as it is ruled by the minority. The minority is so powerful that the majority gives in,” said Dr Mahathir, adding that sometimes the situation could become violent.

Given the current political scenario, he said governments had to acquire new skills to manage their countries.

The three-day conference was jointly organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia and Asean-Institutes of Strategic and International Studies.

Asia tak boleh abai isu keselamatan: Najib

KUALA LUMPUR: Asia perlu berani memikul tanggungjawab lebih besar demi keselamatan sendiri dan mewujudkan rangka kerja bagi memastikan keselamatan serta menjaga kepentingannya, kata Perdana Menteri, Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Bercakap pada Persidangan Meja Bulat Asia Pasifik ke-26, yang bertemakan 'Orde Keselamatan dan Urus Tadbir Asia' di sini, malam tadi, Najib berkata Asia perlu mengubah cara pemikiran mereka yang sebelum ini diprogram untuk lebih memberi tumpuan kepada pembangunan ekonomi sehingga mengabaikan isu keselamatan.

"Meskipun kita menghargai bantuan rakan lain yang begitu banyak menyumbang kepada kestabilan serantau, Asia perlu berubah daripada sekadar menjadi pengguna kepada pengeluaran bagi keselamatan," katanya.

Najib berkata, jika Asia ingin berkuasa dalam arena politik global, ia tidak boleh mengelak daripada berterus-terang dan menyatakan pendirian berhubung isu sensitif seperti pelucutan senjata nuklear, pembinaan senjata serta pakatan ketenteraan.



NAJIB ketika berucap pada Persidangan Meja Bulat Asia Pasifik ke-26, di ibu negara, malam tadi.

"Asia perlu bangkit dan diberi perhatian," katanya.

Dalam merangka hala tuju Asia masa depan, Najib menggariskan dua pertimbangan penting iaitu pertama, hubungan mesti diasaskan pada satu spektrum yang luas dalam sesuatu bidang dan tidak hanya ditakrifkan oleh isu tunggal dan kedua, tidak ada ruang untuk permusuhan di Asia.

Najib berkata, Asia tidak perlu

obsesi kepada manfaat ekonomi semata-mata kerana ia boleh merosakkan kestabilan serantau, jika terpaksa tunduk akibat kebimbangan ketenteraan.

"Lihat Asean sebagai contoh. Tiga tonggak iaitu politik-keselamatan, ekonomi dan sosio budaya perlu sama-sama kuat, jika tidak, kestabilan 10 anggota organisasi akan terancam.

"Asia tidak boleh berdiri dengan

sebelah kaki; ia perlu memperkuatkan asas penubuhannya, dan ini membabitkan, antara lain, mengeratkan hubungan antara rakyat," katanya.

Najib berkata, Asia tidak seharusnya membenarkan konflik dan perebutan kuasa sekali lagi memecah-belahkan mereka.

"Apa yang kita perlukan ialah kerjasama, dan syukurlah ia senang didapati di rantau Asia," katanya.

Beliau berkata sejak 1967, Asean mengiktiraf nilai kestabilan dan mengasaskan hubungan berdasarkan prinsip saling menghormati serta 'memakmurkan jiran,' dan semangat kerjasama yang dipelopori itu diperluas di luar Asia Tenggara.

Perdana Menteri berkata, Asia menolak ekstremisme dalam semua bentuk, namun apabila terdapat perbezaan yang ketara, mengakui suara golongan terpendil perlu didengari.

"Meminggirkan pendapat yang berbeza adalah tidak produktif dan hanya akan menyebabkan rungutan lama kekal serta menimbulkan masalah baharu," katanya. — BER-NAMA

Asia perlu menjadi penggerak keamanan

KUALA LUMPUR 28 Mei - Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak berkata, Asia perlu ditransformasi untuk menjadi kuasa penggerak keamanan dan keselamatan berbanding sekadar menjadi 'pengguna' keamanan sedia ada.

Menurut Perdana Menteri, Asia juga seharusnya mengambil lebih tanggungjawab terhadap keselamatan serantau daripada bergantung kepada kuasa luar.

"Di samping kita menghargai bantuan daripada rakan negara lain yang telah menyumbangkan kepada kestabilan serantau, Asia perlu berubah menjadi kuasa penggerak keamanan.

"Secara lebih jelas, kita perlu mengukuhkan rangka kerja untuk memastikan keselamatan dan menyisihkan sementara kepentingan masing-masing," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian ketika menyampaikan ucapan sempena Meja Bulat Asia Pasifik Ke-26, Keselamatan Pentadbiran dan Orde Asia di ibu negara malam ini.

Najib berkata, dalam merangka masa depan Asia, rantau itu perlu mengambil kira dua aspek penting iaitu meluaskan spektrum hubungan serantau dan ia tidak hanya terhad kepada sesuatu isu sahaja.

Kata beliau, kekraban ASEAN perlu dijadikan sebagai contoh dengan tiga teras utama iaitu kestabilan politik, ekonomi dan sosiobudaya dilihat kukuh dan selari.

"Asia tidak boleh berdiri di kaki sendiri. Ia perlu asas yang kukuh dan merangkumi hubungan erat sesama manusia. Keduaanya, Asia perlu mengelak daripada persaingan sesama sendiri. Kita juga tidak harus membenarkan konflik dan perebutan kuasa yang akan memecah belahkan kita.

"Kita perlu bekerjasama dan bersyukur kerana kerjasama itu ada di Asia," tegasnya.



NAJIB Tun Razak menyatakan sesuatu kepada bekas Duta Besar Jepun ke Malaysia, Masahiko Horie (dua dari kanan) pada persidangan Meja Bulat Asia Pasifik Ke-26, Keselamatan Pentadbiran dan Orde Asia di Kuala Lumpur, malam tadi. Turut kelihatan, Pengerusi Institut Kajian Strategik dan Antarabangsa (ISIS), Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan (kiri). - UTUSAN/ABDUL RAZAK LATIF