

ISIS roundtable talks to focus on MH370

KUALA LUMPUR: The disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 may be an unlikely subject for a regional security conference, but the case is nevertheless expected to be a key topic at the upcoming 28th Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR).

Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia chief executive Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa said the international search effort for the aircraft had raised many foreign diplomacy and security issues, and may pave the way for new methods of co-operation.

"This was an unexpected case which has seen countries that usually do not agree, coming together for one purpose," he said.

The three-day roundtable, jointly organised by ISIS Malaysia and Asean-ISIS, will start on June 2. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is expected to deliver the keynote address.

Rastam said this year's roundtable will focus on the profound shifts across Asia Pacific region, with current developments such as the military coup in Thailand, elections in India and Indonesia, and the anti-China riots in Vietnam expected to set the tone.

"We are facing many new situations, new policy pronouncements and new security issues. As such, there is a great need for us to continue finding ways to relieve tensions to encourage cooperation and avoid unnecessary difficulties."

28TH ASIA-PACIFIC
ROUNDTABLE

2 - 4 June 2014, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA



Japan and its role in promoting peace and security in Asia will be raised in the opening plenary session on Tuesday by Rastam and Japan's senior parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Norio Mitsuya.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "Abenomics" and Japan's defence and national security policies will also be examined in a separate session on Wednesday.

Speakers at the session on Asean's challenges in strengthening community-building efforts post-2015 include Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace founding chairman Prince Norodom Sirivudh and Singapore's High Commissioner to Malaysia and former Asean secretary-general Ong Keng Yong.

Other topics on the agenda include resolving maritime disputes in the South China Sea, managing tensions between China and Japan, political and economic reforms in Myanmar, the rise of India, and the changing role of global superpowers in Asia.

'Maintain spirit of cooperation'

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL: Common security depends on countries working closely with each other, says PM

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday called for the spirit of international co-operation to be maintained and boosted across all issues.

He said the joint cooperation shown by 26 countries during the search for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 would be equally beneficial in responding to other forms of disaster in the future.

"Our common security depends on our ability to work together as closely as we can.

"The foundation is already laid. It can be further strengthened through the building of institutions, rules and norms within the accepted regional structure," Najib said in his keynote address at the 28th Asia-Pacific Roundtable opening dinner here last night.

His address was delivered by Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Najib said countering the threat of terrorism, for example, required a great deal of intelligence-sharing and coordination between security agencies.

He cited a case three weeks ago, when planned attacks on foreign consulates in India were foiled after the detention of four suspects in two countries.



Home Minister **Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi** (second from left), Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia (ISIS) chairman **Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan** (left) and ISIS chief executive officer **Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa** (third from left) meeting delegates at the 28th Asia-Pacific Roundtable opening dinner in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Pic by Khairull Azry Bidin

"It was only through the strong and sustained cooperation between security agencies in Malaysia and India that we managed to foil a series of potentially disastrous terrorist attacks. This incident, once again, highlights the importance of international cooperation."

Najib also called upon countries with nuclear weapons to accede to the protocol of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone.

"For the sake of our security, we

should stay vigilant against any and all threats. Malaysia has always held firm in its belief of a nuclear-free world."

The country, he said, was doing its part to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through its endorsement of the Proliferation Security Initiative.

"We will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with like-minded countries to build a world where our children will not have to live under

the dark cloud of such weapons."

Najib said while states had a legitimate right to its defence and security, increases in defence spending and arms building in Asia should be embedded within a cooperative and peaceful framework.

Malaysia and its Asean partners, he said, had placed much emphasis on building institutions, rules and norms, especially in the ongoing efforts to realise the Asean community.

"Institutions and rules are the driving force of our efforts to promote greater interdependence and deepen cooperation among nations in this region.

"It should be recognised that while much has been accomplished there is a lot to be done."

The three-day roundtable, jointly organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia and Asean-ISIS, ends tomorrow.

PRIME NEWS

'Make choices based on principles'

NEUTRAL: US rebalance strategy to improve relations with Asian countries

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THE United States urged Asia-Pacific countries to make choices based on principles, rather than take sides in its relations with China.

United States Acting Assistant Secretary of Defence for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Kelly Magsamen said yesterday the US administration's rebalance to Asia strategy was about improving its



engagement with Asian countries as a whole and was not aimed at curbing China's influence in the region.

The US, she said, was interested in working with Asian countries, not only on security issues, but also on common challenges, such as cyber security, climate change and terrorism.

"We are not asking (countries in the region) to pick between us and China, but to make choices about principles.

"The choices that this region makes now are going to define the future and the direction of the next century," she said at the 28th Asia-Pacific Roundtable here yesterday.

Magsamen was speaking as a panelist at a session, titled "Fostering Peace and Managing Security in the Asia Pacific", moderated by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia chief executive Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa.

She was joined on the panel by the European External Action Service managing director for Asia and the Pacific, Viorel Isticioaia Budura, Japan's National Security Secretariat cabinet councillor Major-General Jun Nagashima and Korea University Graduate School of International Studies Professor Dr Kim Sung-han.



The 28th Asia-Pacific Roundtable underway in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Pic by Nurul Syazana Rose Razman

The US administration, Magsamen said, was supportive of efforts to resolve ongoing disputes between China and its neighbours, such as overlapping claims over territories in the South China Sea.

She said the US would not take a position on the territorial claims, but hoped that they would be resolved according to the rules and norms of international law, rather than through force, coercion or intimidation.

"We want more dialogues, not monologues. It does not mean we have to agree on everything, but we need to manage these disputes clearly and peacefully with respect to international law."

Her comments, made in response to a question from a delegate, were a softer echo of the statements by US Defence Sec-

retary Chuck Hagel at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore last week.

Hagel's blunt criticism of China's actions in the South China Sea at the dialogue had drawn rebukes from high-ranking Chinese government officials.

Magsamen said engaging and welcoming China's rise was part of the US rebalancing strategy and that the administration welcomed all efforts to improve engagement on security issues in the Asia-Pacific.

"Rebalancing is about our (American) interests, too.

"The US has underrated security in this region and we want to make sure we will be able to correct that, moving forward."

The three-day roundtable, jointly organised by ISIS Malaysia and Asean-ISIS, ends today.

PRIME NEWS

'KL can lead fight against maritime crime'

EXPERIENCE: Expert says Asean Coast Guard can tackle transnational crime

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MALAYSIA can take the lead in the development of a regional agency to combat crime across maritime boundaries, an expert on the South China Sea said yesterday.

Professor Emeritus Dr Carlyle A. Thayer, from the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, said an Asean Coast Guard, aimed at protecting regional security, could include protocols on how to effectively combat transnational crime, such as drugs and arms smuggling, and human trafficking.

He said Malaysia had been at the forefront of such efforts with the setting up of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency in 2004.

"Malaysia, by establishing this agency, recognised the need for something other than the Royal Malaysian Navy (to patrol its borders).

"Military tools are inappropriate (to com-

bat transnational crime), but no civilian agency should stop at its own borders and let the bad guys get away.

"It needs cooperation from other countries, and that has been a deficit in Asean," he said after speaking at a session on maritime security at the 28th Asia-Pacific Roundtable organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Isis) Malaysia and Asean-Isis yesterday.

Thayer said instead of creating a new organisation, the nascent Asean Coast Guard, which first convened last year, could work out more ways to cooperate with each other and strengthen safety across ocean borders.

"We are dealing with a very large area so there needs to be more resources and capacity-building.

"It is going to be a long process. You will not be able to stop transnational crime completely, but that is the direction that we need to go.

"Malaysia is at the forefront of this and other states need to follow that example."

He also said Malaysian authorities should not be blamed for its handling of the search-and-recovery effort for Malaysian Airlines flight MH370, which

went missing last March 8.

However, he said, questions needed to be raised about current SAR practices, particularly in cases where an aircraft disappears from radar without warning.

"There are lessons to be learned about what to do if an aircraft goes off radar."

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