

# Experts to discuss pressing issues in Asia

**KUALA LUMPUR:** For three days, from June 1, pressing issues in the region will be discussed by prominent scholars, academicians and researchers at the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR) here.

The event, organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia and Asean-ISIS, will host 300 renowned speakers and participants from 30 countries, including the former foreign ministers of Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is expected to launch the event and deliver a keynote address on June 1.

ISIS chairman Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa said: "The first APR had fewer than 50 participants. The roundtable was held in a different context. It is a different world now and, as such, the topics that will be discussed have changed in accordance to what is urgent and interesting to be debated," he told the *New Straits Times*.

He said it would focus on a host of



current issues in Asia and Asean.

"One of the most major issues is sustainability, specifically on water, food and energy. How do they interlink? Is it a matter of hard security or economic development? Questions such as these will be asked and hopefully deliberated and answered during the roundtable."

Rastam said the role of major powers would also be discussed, with a plenary session specifically dedicated to examining China's initiatives.

## **Be wary of extremists exploiting technology to recruit terrorists – Najib**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Members of the Asia-Pacific Region must be wary of extremists, who have been adapting and exploiting technology in sophisticated ways for purposes of propaganda and recruiting terrorists, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The prime minister said the fight against extremism must be waged in the mind, articulated in speech, and amplified in cyberspace so that the battle zones of today do not become breeding grounds for misguided ideologies to be exported abroad.

"This region has for centuries been enriched by the assimilation and integration of different peoples, cultures, and traditions.

"We must therefore proactively propagate a narrative of moderation, tolerance, and peace. This is not just a counter-narrative to the one spread by the extremists. It is in fact our heritage," he said in his keynote address at the Asia Pacific Roundtable in the capital, Monday night.

Najib said this was why technology could be the ally, and to be skillfully used to uphold the peaceful, moderate traditions which were long adopted in the Asia Pacific countries.



*PM Najib Razak delivers his key address at the 29th Asia-Pacific*

*Roundtable held here on Monday. - Bernama Photo*

## PRIME NEWS

# PM: Resolve migrant issue at Asean level

**REGIONAL CHALLENGE:**

Najib also seeks help from other nations, international bodies

**SYED UMAR ARIFF**

KUALA LUMPUR

news@nst.com.my

**P**RIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the migrant issue in the region must be resolved at the Asean level with assistance from other countries and international bodies.

He expressed his concern over the discovery of graves of alleged human trafficking victims along the Perlis-Thailand border, and called for action to be taken against those responsible.

"I am deeply concerned by the plight of the Rohingya migrants trying to reach our shores.

"I was particularly shocked by the discovery of graves of alleged victims of people smugglers along the Perlis-Thailand border.

"We must find and punish those responsible.

"The migrant issue should be resolved at the Asean level, with assistance from other countries and international bodies as needed.

"Only if countries work in co-ordination can we defeat this trade in human misery," said Najib in his



speech when opening the two-day 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable at a dinner here last night.

He said the migrant issue was among the many challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region.

He implored participants in the meeting to share their thoughts openly to resolve pressing cases.

"The insights and analyses from conferences such as this will help governments make important decisions and formulate long-term policies, initiatives and programmes.

"Over the next two days, I encourage you to engage in frank and robust discussions about the key challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region."

While promoting the innovation of the educated and young as part of the Asean objective, Najib reminded participants to be wary of the capabilities of extremists in employing similar technologies for terrorism, which is a global threat.





Sultan of Perak **Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah** and Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** at the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable in **Kuala Lumpur** yesterday. Pic by Asyraf Hamzah

Extremists are adapting to and exploiting technology in sophisticated ways for propaganda and recruitment purposes.

"Let me be clear. We reject their message of violence and extremism, just as we reject terrorism, violence and extremism in all forms," said Najib.

He said the region must be proactive in propagating moderation and peace to safeguard its values and heritage.

"This region has, for centuries, been enriched by the assimilation and integration of different peoples, cultures and traditions.

"We must, therefore, proactively propagate a narrative of moderation, tolerance and peace.

"This is not just a counter-narrative to the one spread by the extremists. It is, in fact, our heritage."

On a related matter, Najib called for the need to consolidate regional stability to foster and preserve pos-

itive and peaceful relations between nations, including those with major powers.

"We need to make a common cause, maximise opportunities for collaboration and carefully manage any potential source of tension.

"Stability is one of those words that can mean different things to different people.

"Standard definitions may convey a sense of permanence.

"We are so used to mentioning 'stability' in conjunction with words like 'preserve' and 'maintain'.

"A desire for stability could, therefore, be easily confused with a demand for everything to remain the same, with familiarity prized and change treated with caution."

He said the rise of economic power in the region should not be seen as threatening.

Historically, said Najib, the Asia-Pacific region had consistently

bore witness to the most dramatic improvement in living standards in modern human history.

"And, along with these improvements come shifts in mindsets and expectations.

"The most dramatic growth has taken place in China, where real income has risen 12-fold in the past three decades.

"As a result, more than half a billion people have been raised out of extreme poverty within a single generation.

"The ongoing shifts in the distribution of power and influence in the Asia-Pacific region should not necessarily be seen as inherently threatening."

Present were Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, Asean Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Asean-ISIS) chairman Yong Chanthalangsy and ISIS Malaysia chairman and chief executive Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa.



# Within reach of world-class public transport system

By **RAZAK AHMAD** and **MAZWIN NIK ANIS**  
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Asia-Pacific region must promote moderation, tolerance and peace as its hallmarks, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"The fight against extremism must be waged in the mind, articulated in speech, and amplified in cyberspace so that the battle zones of today do not become breeding grounds for misguided ideologies to be exported abroad," the Prime Minister said when opening the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable here yesterday.

More than 300 speakers and participants are taking part in the three-day event organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia and Asean-ISIS.

In his speech Najib also touched on the plight of Rohingya migrants, saying that the issue should be resolved at the Asean level with help from other countries as needed.

However, he noted that the people smuggling trade could only be defeated if the countries worked in coordination with each other.

At another function yesterday, Najib said

having a world-class public transport system that is reliable and convenient is within reach for Malaysia.

However, in order for the public to enjoy an efficient transport service, there is one weakness that needs urgent address – the issue of connectivity and integration.

"The public transport system in the Klang Valley is undergoing major changes that will boost its efficiency.

"At the same time, it is crucial to ensure that all the transport systems are integrated," said Najib when launching the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) service.

Also present were Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Idris Jala, Prasarana Malaysia Berhad chairman Tan Sri Ismail Adam and Sunway group founder and chairman Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah.

Najib also commended the BRT-Sunway Line as a successful collaboration between the public and private sector, namely Prasarana and Sunway.

Watch the video  
[thestar.com.my/Videos/](http://thestar.com.my/Videos/)



# Be wary of hi-tech extremists

> PM warns of sophisticated ways being used to recruit terrorists

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Members of the Asia-Pacific Region must be wary of extremists, who have been adapting and exploiting technology in sophisticated ways for purposes of propaganda and recruiting terrorists, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak (pix).

He said the fight against extremism must be waged in the mind, articulated in speech, and amplified in cyberspace so that the battle zones of today do not become breeding grounds for misguided ideologies to be exported abroad.

"This region has for centuries been enriched by the assimilation and integration of different peoples, cultures, and traditions.

"We must therefore propagate a narrative of moderation, tolerance, and peace. This is not just a counter-narrative to the one spread by the extremists. It is in fact our heritage," he said in his keynote address at the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR) here last night.

Najib said this was why technology could be an ally to be skillfully used to uphold the peaceful, moderate traditions which were long



adopted in the Asia-Pacific countries.

He said one of the pressing challenges for the Asia-Pacific region was the need to consolidate regional stability

and to promote positive, predictable and peaceful relations among and between nations, especially the major powers.

Najib added that the history of Asia-Pacific had shown that it had always been a region characterised by profound change.

"In recent decades the region has witnessed the most dramatic improvements in living standards in modern human history. And along with these improvements have come shifts in mind-sets and expectations," he added.

Najib said the Asia-Pacific region needs to come to terms with the rapid shifts in its strategic environment.

On the APR, Najib hoped that the participants would adopt a balanced and constructive approach towards issues to be discussed over the next couple of days.

The three-day roundtable, organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia, begins today. - Bernama



## **Najib wants fight against terrorism taken to cyberspace, to counter militant**

*Members of the Asia-Pacific Region must be wary of extremists, who have been adapting and exploiting technology in sophisticated ways for purposes of propaganda and recruiting terrorists, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today.*

The prime minister said the fight against extremism must be waged in the mind, articulated in speech, and amplified in cyberspace so that the battle zones of today do not become breeding grounds for misguided ideologies to be exported abroad.

"This region has for centuries been enriched by the assimilation and integration of different peoples, cultures and traditions.

"We must therefore proactively propagate a narrative of moderation, tolerance, and peace. This is not just a counter-narrative to the one spread by the extremists. It is in fact our heritage," he said in his keynote address at the Asia Pacific Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur tonight.

Najib said this was why technology could be the ally, and to be skillfully used to uphold the peaceful, moderate traditions which were long adopted in the Asia-Pacific countries.

Najib said one of the pressing challenges for the Asia-Pacific Region was the need to consolidate regional stability and to promote positive, predictable and peaceful relations among and between nations, especially the major powers.

He said there was a need to make common cause, maximise opportunities for collaboration, and carefully manage any potential sources of tensions.

"Stability is one of those words that can mean different things to different people. Standard definition may convey a sense of permanence. We are so used to mentioning 'stability' in conjunction with words like 'preserve' and 'maintain'.

"A desire for stability could therefore be easily confused with a demand that everything remains the same, with familiarity prized and change treated with caution," he said.

Najib said the history of Asia-Pacific had shown that it had always been a region characterised by profound change.

"In recent decades the region has witnessed the most dramatic improvements in living standards in modern human history. And along with these improvements have come shifts in mind-sets and expectations," he added.

Najib said the Asia-Pacific Region need to come to terms with the rapid shifts in its strategic environment.

"We need to realise that regional stability does not hinge on wishing away or seeking to prevent these changes. In fact, failure to properly accommodate and respond to them could create conditions that could lead to instability," said the prime minister.

Najib also said that the prospects for the Asia-Pacific Region also looked promising, with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific estimating 60% of the world's

youth between the ages of 15 and 24 residing in this region, while youth unemployment is among the lowest in the world, at 11%.



*Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is warning of the threat from the use of technology by the militants but feels the same technology is also an ally. – The Malaysian Insider pic, June 1, 2015*

"They are an incredibly spirited, vibrant, and versatile part of the nations, and they will form the future. The technological innovations of recent decades are second nature to them. These innovations have helped to transform our region and bring prosperity to our people," he said.

Touching on the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR), Najib hoped that they would adopt a balanced and constructive approach towards issues to be discussed over the next couple of days.

"Whether as officials who make important decisions, or as scholars and journalists who deliberate on and frame the discourse on key issues, you have the ability and obligation to make a profound and lasting contribution to a positive future for the Asia-Pacific region.

"It is easy to highlight what and where the problems are. It is a lot more difficult to arrive at practical and realistic solutions. I urge you to take that difficult road, and, in the process, make a real difference to the Asia Pacific and to the world," he said.

The three-day roundtable, organised by the Institute of Strategic And International Studies (Isis) Malaysia, which begins today, is aimed at promoting trust and confidence in the Asia-Pacific region.

As a "Track Two" forum, the APR has brought together think-tanks, academics, media representatives and senior government officials acting in their personal capacity to engage in candid dialogue regarding the major security challenges confronting the region. – Bernama



# '2+7' framework with China to benefit Asean members

**RUPA DAMODARAN**

KUALA LUMPUR

[rupabanerji@mediaprima.com.my](mailto:rupabanerji@mediaprima.com.my)

**KUALA LUMPUR:** China's recent strategic initiatives bring huge opportunities for the 10-member Asean region as the grouping heads towards a single market under the Asean Economic Community (AEC), says a senior Chinese foreign affairs official.

Zha Peixin, a member of the foreign policy advisory group of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said China would build a closer China-Asean community of common destiny through the "2+7" framework.

"Asean is a priority in China's neighbour diplomacy and an indispensable partner to implement these strategic initiatives," he said at 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable, here, yesterday.

The initiatives include the "Belt and Road", which is mainly about trade and economic cooperation and cultural exchanges, the US\$40 billion (RM148 billion) Silk Road Fund, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank that has 57 founding members and the new Asian Security



Concept.

"We stand ready to work with Asean to promote the Asian Security Concept and make full use of Asean-led multilateral mechanisms to provide more public security products to the region," Zha said.

On the maritime disputes affecting the region, China is willing to adopt a dual-track approach to settle the issues with Asean countries via dialogues and consultations.

China's strategic initiatives, however, have raised concerns about their implications for Southeast Asia.

"This economic vision contains

the justification for naval expansion and defence modernisation, if only because this was the case with economic powers that in history came before it," remarked Prof Dr Aileen S P Baviera in a panel discussion.

Southeast Asian countries have lived with China under peaceful circumstances but there are concerns and question that arise into the future.

Baviera from the Asian Centre in the University of the Philippines questioned if China's new strategic initiatives could converge with Southeast Asia's own preferences of regional order.

Another academician, Dr Madhu Bhalla from India, does not view the Chinese initiatives as positive warning that they would give rise to numerous security implications.

In an earlier session, Professor Kishore Mahbubani of National University of Singapore said China would have to work very hard to maintain its relations with the rest of the world on an even keel.

"If it does not, it should not be surprised if its adversaries and competitors seize advantages provided by its mistakes."



# Challenging plan for Asean countries

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Asean Community 2015 plan, set to be realised in December, is challenging for its 10 member countries.

Despite the detailed action lines drawn up in each pillar of the plan, which was reflected by the Asean charter, Indonesia School of Government and Public Policy Co-founder Dr Hassan Wirajuda said it was unrealistic to put a deadline to realise the community's aims, as the roadmap remained a work in progress.

"I do not believe that the blueprints and action plans will be fully implemented by January next year, as the objectives set in the 2009-2015 Roadmap are detailed," he said at the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable here yesterday.

Speaking at a plenary session titled "Asean Beyond 2015: What does it mean to be a community?", Hassan said the plan, which was adopted at the Asean Summit 2009, covered three pillars — the Asean Economic Community, Political-Security Community and Socio-Cultural Community.

Hassan, who is former foreign minister of Indonesia, said based on



the Asean secretary-general report at the 25th Asean Summit in November last year, the three community blueprints were progressing well.

However, he said, despite their grand designs, the elaborate targets were diluted.

Institute for Strategic Development Studies Philippines founding president Professor Dr Carolina Hernandez said more emphasis should be placed on the socio-cultural pillar of the plan.

"The third pillar is the most intrusive of sovereignty because it talks about social justice. However,

it has always been looked at as an afterthought.

"What worked then may not work now. Thus, the Asean charter has to be reviewed to adapt to the challenges we face," she said, adding that political will needed to be put behind the socio-cultural blueprint to ensure that Asean became a more people-centric body.

The second speaker said Asean needed to avoid adopting the European model, citing the United Nation's decision-making process, wherein the "power of veto", veto power wielded solely by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, was practised.

Institute of Security and International Studies director Dr Thitinan Pongsudhirak echoed the sentiment, saying the moving around of major powers was impinging the region's growth as a whole.

"It is imperative (for Asean countries) to unite as issues, such as the boat people crisis and the South China Sea conflict, are challenges that are dividing us at a time when we are too interested in economic development."



# Include politics, socio-cultural affairs in AEC

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Asean Economic Community (AEC), which is skewed towards building economic cooperation among Asean's 10 member states, needs to be rebalanced to include politics and social and cultural affairs.

Dr N. Hassan Wirajuda from The Indonesia School of Government and Public Policy said the politics and socio-cultural areas, which are the other two pillars for the single market envisioned for the region by end-2015, had been neglected.

"After 2016, the blueprint would be heavy on the economy with the last pages allotted for the security and political areas," he said during a panel discussion at the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable, here, yesterday.

"We'll also see an imbalance in the implementation. For example, Asean, at the highest level, respects human rights and good governance which I don't think it can adopt next year. We hope they can be adopted by 2035."

Hassan, who is former Indonesian foreign affairs minister, also de-

scribed the AEC as work in progress weighed down by the huge tasks it has to fulfil.

Despite the hurdles, Hassan stressed that Asean could not afford to derail.

Dr Thitinan Pongsudhirak from Thailand's Institute of Security and International Studies said differences had surfaced among the 10 members over the past three years with the latest being the boat people issue.

The region has also been keeping the bigger powers out from the region to maintain peace.

"We've done a lot over the years but we must keep our eye on the ball and not allow it to go too far."

Growth is likely to be expansionary in the region, underpinned by infrastructure development especially rail and ports, he said..

Prof Emeritus Dr Carolina G. Hernandez, meanwhile, urged Asean leaders to conduct some soul-searching and undertake some changes in their plans to incorporate technological developments.

## Asia's Balance of Power Nightmare Unfolds



By Graeme Dobell

The balance of power is one of those concepts that gets the most attention when it's shifting. Or wobbling. When people are talking about it, it's time to be worried. And everybody is worried.

As Grandma observed, family arguments are getting too loud when the whole village is gossiping about whether the marriage will survive.

Balance of power was top of mind and top of text when [Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong](#), launched the Shangri-La dialogue.

Lee's central proposition was a simple one with huge implications: "The strategic balance in Asia is shifting." Mark this is a Big Fact, not a mere opinion.

The Big Fact of Asia's rapidly changing power relativities is directly related to Asia's Top Trend. This is unusual. New and different Big Facts come along all the time while the Top Trend, by definition, is a long-wave phenomenon.

Look back over recent decades to see what this means. In 1989, the Cold War collapsed with the Berlin Wall, and China butchered its own youngsters in Tiananmen Square. These Big Facts didn't derail Asia's Top Trend, which was already broad, powerful and transforming. Asia's Top Trend, then and now, is the economic miracle that has lifted more people from poverty in a shorter time than any other moment in human history.

Lots of other Big Facts keep coming to crowd the screen. China arrives. India rises. Asia hits the economic wall with a financial crisis at the end of '90s; Europe and the U.S. do their own, even more spectacular economic smash, a decade later. Still, for Asia, the Top Trend keeps surging.

All sorts of building work gets done, but in the strategic realm this is slow-motion stuff where ambition outstrips achievement. The confidence of the '90s saw the creation of regional institutions like APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum. The strategic buzz was about achieving transparency and confidence building; today we've got a lot more transparency but not much confidence.



Instead of confidence, we have pleas for stability and rule of law. Stability ain't what we're going to get, was the advice from Malaysia's Prime Minister, Najib Razak, launching the 29th Asia Pacific Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur.

Rapid change in the strategic environment looks inevitable to Najib, but that doesn't have to be a bad thing: "The ongoing shifts in the distribution of power and influence in the Asia Pacific should not necessarily be seen as inherently threatening."

Embracing the Big Fact and the Top Trend, Najib had this observation about the regional hegemon that's feeling the heat: "The US will remain a power of major consequence in the Asia Pacific, despite claims by some that we are witnessing the twilight of America's role and interest in the region." Twilight! So do a reverse Dylan Thomas—go gentle and don't rage against the dying of the light. The Chinese, no doubt, will invent a nifty proverb for the thought.

At Shangri-La, the International Institute for Strategic Studies offered its thoughts on the power balance with its [Asia Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2015](#).

IISS starts with the idea that the [region is too large and diverse](#) for any state to dominate:

Indeed, it is too large for any state unilaterally to protect its own interests or to seek to shape the regional order without risking overstretch or instability. Attempts to do so will be destabilizing and provoke reactions from other regional powers.

Good advice for either the U.S. or China.

The IISS judgement is that fiscal stains are yet to impinge too much on the plans expressed in the U.S. rebalance, although "within the region there is still some doubt as to the sustainability of the U.S. posture in the Asia Pacific beyond the medium term." With the balance in flux, the medium term can arrive quickly:

"Uncertainties remain over what role the U.S. envisages for its allies and partners. The rebalance looks far from complete when one considers the lack of a grand strategy, as well as unresolved questions over specific weapons systems and doctrine aimed at deterring China."

Not much doubt about the grand strategy Xi Jinping has set for Beijing, according to IISS:

"China calculates that its economic power and the interconnectedness of Asian economies will put it at the center – and the apex – of the Asia-Pacific region. In tandem, China seeks to weaken the U.S.-led regional security order and to promote the concept that Asian security should be managed solely by Asians."

The Big Fact of a shifting power balance is a product of the great changes flowing from the Top Trend. And everybody in the village, and the region, is gossiping loudly about what the new Big Fact might do to the Top Trend.



## PRIME NEWS

# Using stories, persuasion to neutralise militants

**ANTIDOTE:** Making a 'counter-narrative' can help extremists realise their folly, says expert

**LAILI ISMAIL**  
KUALA LUMPUR  
news@nst.com.my

**T**HE formulation of a counter-narrative, instead of a military response, should be emphasised in countering terrorism in the midst of the rapid spread of extreme ideologies.

The narrative, said former Bangladesh foreign minister Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, must be one designed to intellectually de-radicalise and de-fang the extremists by persuading them of the folly of their ways.

"Extremists must be shown that their return to the mainstream in harmony with the timeless tenets of their faith is possible," he said at the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR) here yesterday.

Speaking at the 10th plenary session entitled "Radicalisation redux: Bigger, badder, bolder?", Chowdhury said rehabilitation programmes for militants returning home were essential.

He also recommended some elements, such as integrating de-radicalisation training into professional development opportunities for media practitioners, and drawing on



Participants at the **plenary session** of the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable. Pic by Halim Salleh



national and local traditions to develop stronger counter-narratives.

"We are all aware of radicalisation through the Internet. Thus, we need to counter it both online and offline."

Additionally, said Chowdhury, it was important to strengthen criminal justice and rule of law mechanisms.

"This would include community

policing approaches, supporting victims of radicalised violence, training for frontline officials, and legal training for judges, magistrates and prosecutors to ensure just and fair legislation."

Chowdhury stressed that the United Nations and other international organisations must at all times be involved in overseeing the de-radicalisation processes.

"The UN should be able to ensure that the equilibrium between preventive actions and the rule of law is scrupulously maintained. However, these must not be rendered into tools to constrain liberty," he said.

He said, to deal with radicalisation, coordinated efforts must come from governments, civil society organisations and the private sector.

Chowdhury also cautioned against knee-jerk reactions from overblown threat perceptions from the extremists' growing clout,

which could lead to disastrous consequences.

"Actions of some cannot give all a bad name. There are naysayers and recalcitrants among every set of human belief."

Chowdhury cited the growth of right-wing extremism among Buddhist monks in Myanmar, resulting in the crisis related to the Rohingya community there.

"This has great potential for attracting (Islamic State) attention which might bring the Myanmar to what would have been avoidable grief. Unless the issue of their tragedy at sea is properly addressed, a dire situation would be created," he warned.

Meanwhile, Global Movement of Moderates chief executive officer Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said more focus should be put on counter violent extremism narrative dealing with the supporters of the fighters.

He said there were two kinds of supporters — the hard and the soft.

"Hard supporters usually give financial aid, demonstrate on the streets, store and hide weapons, as well as provide intelligence and safe houses for militants. Soft supporters, on the other hand, publicly support extremists, for instance, by empathising and praying five times a day for the safety of the fighters."

To solve these issues, he said, retelling of the narratives should be done alongside counter-narratives.

"We must also involve civil society, as governmental resources are very limited and sometimes lack credibility, as well as promote inter-religious dialogue for people to understand the faiths of others."



## PRIME NEWS

# Nations' roles in fighting threats

## GROWING CONCERNS:

Terrorism, human trafficking and cybersecurity hot topics at event

**LAILI ISMAIL**

KUALA LUMPUR  
news@nst.com.my



A SIZEABLE focus was put on each nation's role in arresting the growing threat of terrorism, human trafficking and cybersecurity at the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable.

During the numerous plenary sessions held at the three-day event, representatives of think tanks from across the region also deliberated on what Asean members could do to make the Asean Community ambition a reality.

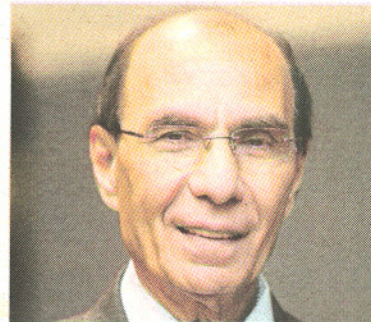
Concrete and specific steps that can be taken to meet expectations of Asean's capacity as well as the possible review of the Asean Char-

ter were discussed extensively during the third plenary session.

Indonesia School of Government and Public Policy co-founder Dr Hassan Wirajuda said it was unrealistic to put a deadline to realise the Community's aims as the roadmap was a work in progress.

Institute for Strategic Development Studies Philippines founding president Professor Emeritus Dr Carolina Hernandez said more emphasis should be placed on the sociocultural pillar of the plan to ensure that Asean would become a more people-centric body.

"It is imperative (for Asean) to



NSTP chairman **Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan** says rising powers in Asia Pacific create worries for others in the region

unite as issues, such as the boat people crisis and the South China Sea conflict, are challenges that are dividing us at a time when we are too interested in economic development," said Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS) director Dr Thitinan Pongsudhirak.

During another session, speakers examined China's new strategic initiatives, such as the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, from a broad strategic perspective.

New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd

chairman Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan said rising powers in Asia Pacific had wielded their strengths and created worries for other countries in the region.

"The main worry is the managing of territorial issues and how their divisiveness does not augur well with the peace and harmony the people in the region have been enjoying," said the ISIS Malaysia former chairman, who also chaired a plenary session.

Cybersecurity was a salient issue discussed at the roundtable where commentators were split between the extremes of the inescapability of a cyber "Pearl Harbour" and the assured counterpoint that cyber war would not take place.

In this plenary session, the audience were enlightened on topics, such as cyber warfare, espionage and subversion on national security, as well as the implications of cyber attacks on warfare.

Another topic was the upsurge in violence by radical groups, such as the Islamic State, and their growing influence on this region.

Former Bangladesh foreign minister Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowd-

hury said emphasis should be put on persuasive counter-narrative that was designed to de-radicalise and defang the extremists.

"We are all aware of radicalisation through the Internet, thus, we need to counter it both online and offline. It is also important that United Nations and other international organisations are constantly involved in overseeing the de-radicalisation processes."

Meanwhile, Global Movement of Moderates chief executive officer Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah elaborated on counter violent extremism narrative dealing with the supporters of militant extremists.

The three-day event held from Monday gathered some 300 scholars, academicians and researchers from 30 countries to discuss pressing issues in the region.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak launched the event and delivered a keynote address on Monday. Present were Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, Asean ISIS chairman Ambassador Yong Chanthalangsy, and ISIS Malaysia chairman and chief executive Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa.



## PRIME NEWS

# 'China resolved to settling sea rows'

## SILK ROAD AMBITION:

Beijing has a dual-track approach, says speaker

**LAILI ISMAIL**

KUALA LUMPUR  
news@nst.com.my

**C**HINA is committed to settling regional maritime disputes and bring forth mutual confidence as it pushes to realise its 21st Century Maritime Silk Road ambition.

Proposed in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route Economic Belt is a Chinese initiative to grow investments and collaboration with countries along the historical Silk Road.

China's National Defence Ministry's Centre for International Security Cooperation director senior Colonel Zhou Bo said maritime disputes in Asia-Pacific boiled down to issues of territorial sovereignty and sea boundary delimitation.

"Half of the world's sea boundaries are not demarcated and, therefore, are causing maritime territorial disputes, such as the claims over the islands in the South China Sea," he said at the 29th Asia Pacific Roundtable here that ended on Wednesday.

He said China had also proposed to conduct joint-exploitation while shelving differences to promote mutual understanding.

"China has a dual-track approach in the South China Sea issue. One is ensuring disputes are addressed through consultations and negotiations by concerned countries.

"The other one is maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea through joint efforts between China and Asean countries."

Meanwhile, National Maritime Foundation India director Dr Vijay Sakhujia said it was imperative for Southeast Asian navies to develop robust capabilities.

He said the constraints of geography called for development of naval power by Southeast Asian countries. He added it was also crucial for nations to exercise control and jurisdiction over territorial waters, exclusive economic zones and continental shelves.

On regional naval trends, he said despite the financial crises in 1997 and 2007, acquisitions by the sector had not taken a back seat.

To illustrate this, he cited a study that noted an increase from US\$14.4 billion (RM53 billion) in 2004 to US\$35.5 billion in 2013 in the collective defence spending of Southeast Asian countries. He projected next year's expenditures to exceed US\$40 billion.

Another trend that was fast acquired by nations in the region was the building or development of expeditionary and amphibious capabilities.

This, Sakhujia said, was because nations would want to be able to respond well to disasters, such as cyclones, typhoons and tsunamis. He concluded that Asean-led maritime structures and arrangements had matured and were performing well.





# 'No more worries about resources'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** There is no more anxiety over the lack of resource supplies in Asia-Pacific as the economic growth in China and the rest of the region has progressed strongly.

University of Melbourne economics research fellow Professor Dr Ross Garnaut said, however, it was the resource-exporting countries in the region that were under pressure.

Speaking at the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable here at Hilton Kuala Lumpur, he said the new development model in China had radically changed the balance of demand and supply in global resource markets.

"The reduced costs of capital goods for solar, wind and other renewable energy that have emerged from China's deliberate development of alternatives to fossil fuels have expanded the energy options for other developing countries in the region," he said.

## More options for importing countries

→ From Page 14

Domestic and international environmental pressures, he added, had led China to diversify its energy sources away from fossil fuel, which contributed to excess supply of coal and the dip in coal and gas prices.

Garnaut said the new forms of energy had made the main resource-importing countries less dependent on concentrated sources of fossil fuel supply.

Meanwhile, National University of Singapore's Energy Studies Institute principal fellow Dr Philp Andrews-Speed said the presence of hydrocarbon resources and rich fishing grounds had exacerbated maritime tensions and disputes in the region.

"In addition, the sea lanes are the busiest for maritime trade, with more than 50 per cent of the world's tonnage of sea-borne trade, 50 per cent of traded crude oil and about 70 per cent of global liquefied natural gas supplies."



University of Melbourne economics research fellow **Professor Dr Ross Garnaut** says domestic and international environmental pressures have led China to diversify its energy sources

He said while the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provided a framework for resolving maritime disputes, several countries had yet to observe it.

Andrews-Speed said ongoing efforts to adjust taxes and subsidies must be continued alongside the development of new economic policy instruments.

"These are needed to encourage the reduction of consumption and waste, to enhance material efficiency along supply chains as well as to address external environmental and social costs."



PRIME NEWS



Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia deputy chief executive **Datuk Steven C.M. Wong** (right) speaking at the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable **about the geopolitics of economic partnership agreements in Asia-Pacific** in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday. Pic by Halim Salleh



# Analyst: Use economic deals to resolve conflicts

## POTENT VALUE:

Working via EPAs less problematic than direct approaches

**RUPA DAMODARAN**

KUALA LUMPUR

rupabanerji@btimes.com.my

**E**CONOMIC partnership agreements (EPA) could be a more convenient way for countries to work around issues like territorial disputes.

According to Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia deputy chief executive Datuk Steven C.M. Wong, these agreements carried some potent symbolic value like creating zones of influence. Rightly or wrongly, EPAs are viewed as positive sum and, therefore, less problematic than directly trying to resolve security issues and concerns.



"Use the EPAs as another means of engaging countries (and to fall back on), so that our relations are not dominated by negative aspects like disputes.

"Regional territorial disputes like the South China Sea issues should, therefore, not be allowed to be the determinant of relations among countries," he said in an interview with the NST on the sidelines of the 29th Asia-Pacific Roundtable here that concluded on Wednesday.

"Otherwise, if anything happens, there stands the strong risk of bi-

lateral relations plummeting as seen in border disputes between India and Pakistan, or between China and Vietnam. Regional economic integration efforts must be responded to if they are not to be exclusive."

He said it was not a coincidence that after years of discussion, the European Union (EU) and the United States finally initiated the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and the EU was stepping up efforts to engage communities in Asean.

"But EPAs do not guarantee fair and square deals, and when one gets down to specifics, it becomes obvious that they are not all the soft touch that leaders and officials make them out to be.

"Although in this part of the world, especially in the Asean region, member states with varied sizes and development stages deal with each other with a high measure of trust and confidence, and now, that is being extended to its dialogue partners, too.

"EPAs like the Trans Pacific Partnership and TTIP are much more

comprehensive and demanding than the ones negotiated at the multilateral level that Asean is used to.

"Some of the larger powers like China were able to craft their own agreements like its pursuit of deeper bilateral ties with Asean, which it called the China-Asean FTA Upgrade, while negotiating the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) and pursuing the FTAAP (Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific) to seal its trans-Pacific interests."

For Wong, the key consideration for participating countries was not just the benefits of inclusion in these economic pacts, but the strategic "costs of exclusion".

"The costs of exclusion are not merely the trade and investment diversion that would occur if participants were to opt out of the TPP. They can be seen as being much wider, extending to the political and security spheres."

He said for middle-sized and smaller states in Asia-Pacific, exclusion from EPAs could bring disadvantages in the present and future.