

Defence ministers meeting 'not a threat'

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Asean Defence Ministers' Meeting is a platform for discussions on security and defence and not a threat to other countries.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said such discussions would lead to greater confidence in the two sectors.

"This process is not based on threat perception but rather on a mechanism to increase the level of interaction and confidence-building measures for the whole region and beyond.

"We want to increase intra-Asean dialogue particularly on defence and security matters," he told a Press conference at the end of the meeting which saw Myanmar's conspicuous absence.

Najib, also Deputy Prime Minister, said there was a possibility that dialogue partners from outside the region would be invited to participate in ADMM.

He said the meeting at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre had been productive and insightful as discussions were conducted in an "open, frank and transparent manner".

The ministers agreed yesterday that the specific objectives of the ADMM would be:

- to promote regional peace and stability through dialogue and co-operation in defence and security;
- to give guidance to existing senior defence and military officials dialogue and co-operation in the field of defence and security within Asean and between Asean and dialogue partners;
- to promote mutual trust and greater understanding of defence policies, threat perceptions and security challenges, as well as enhancement of transparency and openness; and
- to contribute to the establishment of an Asean Security Community (ASC) as stipulated in the Bali Concord II and to promote the implementation of the Vientiane Action Programme on ASC.

The Ministers also agreed to establish an Asean Defence Senior Officials' Meeting to support ADMM activities.

Najib said there were no discussions on military exercises, extradition treaties or peace-keeping forces between member countries.

"We will be discussing these aspects as we go along, but we should not get ahead of ourselves.

"We will move at a comfortable pace within the true spirit of how Asean makes its decisions which is on the basis of concession."

On Myanmar's absence at the ADMM, Najib said it had cited pressing domestic engagements for not attending.