

#ASEAN: Avoid Military Power Struggle In South China Sea Overlapping Region - Najib Bernama
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PUTRAJAYA, April 23 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has asserted that countries involved (claimants) in the maritime territorial overlapping claims in the South China Sea must avoid show of force so as to avoid any incidents of military clashes in the waters concerned.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said given that the overlapping claims were a very complex and sensitive issue, it should be handled with prudence based on the principle of consultation and international law practices.

"Among them we should have consultation without the show of force or raising tensions or any force tactics against smaller countries involved," said Najib

in an interview with Bernama ahead of the 26th ASEAN Summit which will be held in Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi on April 26 and 27.

The overlapping territorial maritime claims involving Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam apart from China and Taiwan is among standing issues that is expected to be raised at this summit.

"I cannot deny there are differences in opinions and maybe to some extent bilateral tensions but overall it is still manageable and we can play our roles in the ASEAN context until a form of resolution is reached," he said.

Najib also stressed that the Declaration of Conduct that was agreed upon in 2002 should be translated to a Code of Conduct as a guide for all parties to avoid any friction or conflict in the disputed region.

So far, however, there was no consensus on the Code of Conduct which should be followed by the countries involved.

It was earlier reported that the draft on the code of conduct had among others suggested a military training guide and ways to avoid incidents in the disputed region.

Najib also said it was important to settle the problem based on the rule of law such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which outlines the principle of settlement on any claims on the basis of compliance to the law.

"Any question on territorial claims between two countries on a bilateral basis is indeed complex, what more, one of a multilateral issue involving several countries...Of course it becomes more complex and multi-dimensional," said the Prime Minister.

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