

## **Malaysia's foreign policy is clear and consistent — Anifah Aman**

**MALAY MAIL ONLINE**

**September 17, 2017**

SEPT 17 — I refer to the comment article written by Rais Hussin, a Supreme Council Member of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM), who also heads the Policy and Strategy Bureau of PPBM, entitled All that glitters is not gold in US-Malaysia relationship which was published by malaysiakini.com on 15 September 2017.

I noted Rais Hussin keen interests on the conduct of Malaysia's foreign policy. As Rais Hussin would appreciate, Malaysia's foreign policy is clear and consistent. Malaysia continues to pursue an independent, principled and pragmatic foreign policy, with the overarching thrust to safeguard its sovereignty and national interests as well as to contribute meaningfully towards a just and equitable community of nations.

The conduct of Malaysia's foreign policy will continue to be guided by the principles of respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the affairs of other nations, peaceful settlement of disputes, peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit in relations.

Therefore, I am perplexed to discover inaccurate and false narrative in his comment article, and wonder whether Rais Hussin was being deliberately obtuse. As such, I am compelled to address the inaccurate and false narrative, point by point as below:

### **1. Malaysia has entered the orbit of Chinese influence both commercially and militarily. On any given week, many illegal Chinese fishing vessels cruise along the coasts of West and East Malaysia.**

As a small nation that relies heavily on international trade, Malaysia has no choice but to have relations with all countries in the world. As threats to peace and security become more complex, Malaysia has no choice but to work together with all countries in the world.

Increased economic and investment activities between Malaysia and China were the result of globalisation and the law of supply and demand. Likewise, increased activities in the sphere of security would include closer military cooperation. It should in no way be construed as a sign that Malaysia has entered the orbit of Chinese influence. Malaysia has similar relations with many other countries, including the United States of America, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, France, Australia, Singapore, etc.

The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agencies (MMEA) will arrest any fishing vessels that conduct illegal fishing activities in Malaysia's maritime areas. MMEA vessels and aircraft, as well as vessels and aircraft belonging to the Malaysian Armed Forces conduct routine patrol and surveillance of Malaysia's maritime areas. Chinese fishing vessels have been spotted only sporadically, and therefore it is completely untrue and utterly erroneous to suggest that Chinese fishing vessels cruise along the coasts of West and East Malaysia on a weekly basis.

**2. More oddly, the Foreign Minister Anifah Aman has allowed two Chinese submarines to dock in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, with the most recent berthing taking place just before Trump met Najib in the White House. The very act of allowing Chinese submarine to break into Malaysian waters, all without the formality of conducting a joint exercise, suggests that Malaysia is now a quasi-alliance of China that is willing to listen to Beijing at every turn. Thus, how can the US-Malaysia relationship serve as a building block of a stronger international maritime order?**

It is true that Chinese warship and submarine made a port call at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah in early September 2017. That was not the first time that Chinese military vessels make a port call at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and would not be the last.

Military vessels from numerous countries including the United States of America, Australia, Japan, France, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, etc., have made port calls to various Malaysian ports, including at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and will continue to do so.

Therefore, it is clearly a fallacy to equate the recent docking of Chinese military vessels as a sign of Malaysia quasi-alliance with China.

Military vessels undertake port call at foreign countries to replenish supply, provide shore leave to the crew after long period at sea, as well as to undertake minor maintenance.

Port call by foreign military vessels also contribute to local economies.

With regard to the procedure, any foreign military vessels planning to make port call at Malaysian ports, including at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, must submit such request to the Government of Malaysia through diplomatic channels. Such request would be considered by the relevant Malaysian agencies before being submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for final approval.

It is also timely to state at this juncture that Malaysia upholds the supremacy of the rule of law. Malaysia believes that international law is the equaliser amongst states, regardless of their political, economic or military power. All countries must work together to ensure peace and stability, as well as maritime order.

**3. Fourthly, Malaysia did nothing monumental with regards to Asean and the East Asian Summit in 2015 when Putrajaya was the chair of both entities, except holding grandiose and well-choreographed meetings as a public relations stunt.**

**4. Yet, 2015 was the year when China's militarisation of the South China Sea began in earnest.**

**5. If Malaysia couldn't contain the situation in the South China Sea and North Korea, why should one believe that without chairing Asean and the East Asian Summit, Malaysia could wield even more influence?**

Malaysia's Chairmanship of Asean in 2015 was well-regarded by many countries. Malaysia's constructive approach on various issues including the South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula (and North Korean nuclear issue) was well-received.

Malaysia has done admirably in advancing discourse on these issues, taking into account that Asean works on the principle of consensus, and as Chairman, Malaysia is merely a facilitator.

Malaysia's policy on the South China Sea is clear and consistent. Throughout its Chairmanship of Asean in 2015, Malaysia has impressed upon all countries the need to ensure peace, security and stability and to avoid the threat or use of force, as well as to avoid activities that could escalate or complicate situation. Malaysia further stated that recent activities have eroded trust and confidence amongst parties. Malaysia also called on all parties to ensure non-militarisation in the South China Sea.

Malaysia's principled and consistent position was well-received and well-accepted, and reflected as agreed texts in various documents issued during Malaysia's Chairmanship including the various Chairman's Statements, Joint Communique of Asean Ministerial Meeting, etc. The texts were also used in various documents during Laos Chairmanship in 2016.

*\* Datuk Seri Anifah Aman is Malaysia's Foreign Affairs Minister*

**\*\* This is the personal opinion of the writer or publication and does not necessarily represent the views of Malay Mail Online.**

**COPYRIGHT © 2017 MALAY MAIL ONLINE**

Source: <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/what-you-think/article/malaysias-foreign-policy-is-clear-and-consistent-anifah-aman#GDSX293qHuxdKXAc.97>