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THE INTENT OF MALAYSIA DEFENCE WHITE PAPER

One of the key takeaways on issues highlighted by the Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad during the launching of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition 2019 (LIMA 2019) is the development of Malaysia inaugural Defence White Paper (DWP). Rightly so when Dr. Mahathir reiterated that the white paper is meant at informing the public of its priorities and future plans to bolster defence and security of the country and more importantly that the local defence industry are fully aware of Malaysia defence outlook so that the investment on research and development are in tandem with the government intention.



Dr. Mahathir at the opening ceremony of LIMA2019

The DWP project was initiated as part of the PH government pledge to be more transparent when conducting its domestic and foreign policy issues which include defence matters. The initiative when first announced by the Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu in August last year, raised eye brows since the concept of the white paper itself will entails a very comprehensive policy document which manifest the government's vision for defence related matters. It is important to note that DWP is a public document which outlines the broad strategic policy framework for defence planning, with a medium

term outlook of 5 to 10 years' timescale. It is not intended to be re-drafted every year or two like the National Defence Policy, but rather to provide sufficient perspective to enable multi-year budgeting and planning.

With the Prime Minister statement regarding DWP in LIMA2019 which is attended by local and foreign industry players and the Defence Minister assurance that the paper will be debated in the upcoming September Parliament session, it is indeed a very highly anticipated defence related report and considered a very significant achievement not only for the PH government but also for the defence sector.

When Dr. Mahathir point out the the white paper will be beneficial for the defence industry, this is due to the fact that the DWP will address the future defence assets procurement of the country. And rightly so when Mohamad Sabu reiterated that cyber and space technology will be dealt with in the study, it is meant to say that advance defence technology will not be excluded in our defence policy.

The articulation of Malaysia's hardware defence needs is only part of our defence policy and strategy and this no doubt will be addressed in the white paper. But again when formulating our defence strategy, sensitive security related issues also need to be addressed. The white paper should not be treated as a public relation exercise or propaganda tool but as an integral part not only for defence planning but also foreign affairs implementation.

The white paper should link threat assessments not only with defence policy, doctrine, strategy and resource constraints but also the geopolitical relationships between our neighbours. With that in mind the white paper must include Kuala Lumpur geopolitical relationships with its closest neighbours such as Jakarta, Bangkok and Manila. It is indeed a very sensitive issue but in the process of formulating defence policy, how Malaysia conducts its foreign affairs are part and parcel to a comprehensive policy formulation.

How Kuala Lumpur conducts itself in the international arena vis-à-vis with super powers such as the United States and China for example should be

