



PARLIAMENTARY REPLY

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WRITTEN REPLY BY MINISTER FOR DEFENCE DR NG ENG HEN TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION ON ASSESSMENT ON THE AUSTRALIA-UK-US PACT ON 4 OCTOBER 2021

Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong: To ask the Minister for Defence what is the Ministry's assessment on the Australia-UK-US pact and whether the proposed Australian nuclear submarines will be allowed to use Singapore's port facilities.

Minister for Defence, Dr Ng Eng Hen:

1. Multilateral security groupings in any geographic region has been a fact of life, as countries seek to secure their own strategic interests. For Singapore, as a small country, we must adjust nimbly to existing and new groupings to guard our own interests too. For example, Singapore is a member of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) between Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the UK, that commemorates its Golden Jubilee this year. Each FPDA exercise can involve up to 4000 troops, 18 ships, 50 to 60 aircraft, and even submarines, but our ASEAN neighbours accept this, as the grouping is not aimed at any one country but, as intended in its origin, to act as a security umbrella for the peace and stability of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore. The FPDA is inclusive. We have invited the Secretary-General of the Indonesian Ministry of Defence (KEMHAN), as well as ASEAN Defence Attaches to observe our exercises.
2. The 10 nation ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the 18 nation ADMM-Plus was formed 15 and 11 years ago. This security grouping has conducted more than 20 military exercises among its 7 Expert Working Groups in the last decade. In Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation involves 8 member states, 4 observers and 6 dialogue partners. The SCO recently concluded its 6th biennial multinational counter-terrorism military exercise. The Quad of Australia, India, Japan and the US had its first dialogue in 2007 and re-established dialogues in 2017 after a hiatus. The AUKUS pact would be the latest addition.
3. Whatever the configuration, Singapore encourages each grouping to contribute constructively to regional peace and stability, through transparent and open dialogue with others outside the group, and with activities that are non-confrontational, do not escalate tensions and promote a rules-based order. Member nations of these groups should also abide by the ASEAN

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treaties that they have signed individually, such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. MINDEF will continue to engage all groups to push for these outcomes.

4. Australia's nuclear-powered submarine program is expected to take more than 10 years before it rolls out its first submarine for deployment. If at that time, Australia requests to use facilities at our naval bases, we would treat such requests as we do now with various countries. In general, we will facilitate port calls by naval vessels from countries that we have good bilateral ties with and that promote stability in this region. These vessels will have to abide by our laws, regulations and rules during port calls, especially those pertaining to safety for nuclear-powered submarines.

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