

**RM'S STATEMENT AT 4TH ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS'
MEETING PLUS (ADMM PLUS)**

Thank you Mr Chairman.

*Your Excellency Delfin Negrillo Lorenzana, Secretary of National
Defence, Republic of Philippines*

Fellow Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN occupies pride of place in Asia's institutional architecture. The centrality of ASEAN has served as an anchor of stability in the region. For us in India, ASEAN's continuance in this role is vitally important.

Indeed, India's relationship with the ASEAN is a central pillar of our Act East Policy. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has noted, this is at the core of our dream of an Asian Century.

We also support greater ASEAN unity, in spirit and in purpose. ASEAN states have taken the lead in steering effective functioning of successful regional groupings such as the East Asia Summit and ADMM Plus.

Establishing this inclusive dialogue mechanism on defence and security issues under the aegis of ADMM Plus between ASEAN and its dialogue partners has laid down a strong foundation of trust and confidence.

In a short span of time, the ADMM-Plus has emerged as a credible and effective platform which has forged practical co-

operation among the armed forces of member countries in key areas. In doing so, we have been guided by the principles of consensus, transparency and mutual respect for each other's priorities and sensitivities. These principles should continue to be the basis for our future endeavours.

Ladies and gentlemen,

India has taken active part in all ADMM Plus mechanisms and contributed effectively to their success. A shining manifestation of our focus on practical co-operation and jointmanship was the Force 18 combined Field Training Exercise on Humanitarian Mine Action and Peace Keeping Operations organised in Pune, India last year, which witnessed enthusiastic participation from nearly 350 defence personnel from member countries.

This year, India has taken on the co-chairmanship of the 3rd cycle of Experts' Working Group-Military Medicine (EWG-MM) along with Myanmar. We will take forward the work done by earlier co-chairs, Singapore, Japan, Russia and Thailand by deepening our engagement in the area of medical operations especially in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions.

I wish to underline India's commitment to actively engage in the EWG process, and contribute effectively to initiatives by our other ADMM Plus partners.

Colleagues,

The global strategic and security situation is constantly evolving and has thrown up fresh and serious challenges. The defence and security scenario in our shared region has also witnessed significant changes recently. Our countries now need to simultaneously prepare for traditional (military) and non-traditional threats.

The nuclear and missile tests conducted by DPRK, in violation of its international commitments, have triggered serious concern. India has deplored these tests. We remain concerned about the proliferation of nuclear and missile technologies which has adversely impacted India's national security and that of the entire region. It is important that DPRKs' proliferation linkages are investigated and those who have supported its nuclear and missile programme are held accountable.

Terrorism and radicalization pose one of the most immediate and serious security challenges to our societies. I wish to commend our host the Philippines for resolutely addressing the serious threat posed by terrorists in the southern part of the country and reiterate India's zero tolerance for terrorism anywhere and under any circumstances. There are no good terrorists.

Terrorism is now a trans-national phenomena which requires strong collective action by all members of the global community. New developments in Social Media and Cyberspace have expanded the threat, as these are exploited by terrorists to develop less visible but lethal ways and means of manipulating minds of the people.

The transnational activism of terrorist groups, the spectre of returning foreign fighters and the conduct of irresponsible states that provide safe havens, funding and even encouragement to terrorist groups all need to be addressed together and comprehensively. Terrorism anywhere is a threat everywhere.

India has taken resolute measures to fight the scourge of terrorism from across its borders. We fully recognize the role of joint mechanisms with our partners and the role of international and regional forums in fighting this menace. The recent, BRICS Summit Declaration condemning all forms of terrorism and identifying a number of terrorist organisations engaged in dastardly acts was a positive step. India believes that ADMM Plus provides a forum for defence ministers of the region to address the critical issue of terrorism collectively in all its forms and manifestations. We should be clear and unequivocal in our condemnation of terrorism.

Maritime security continues to be another key concern. India supports freedom of navigation, overflight and commerce throughout the region. Nations should resolve maritime disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law. We support a rules based order for oceans and sea that is critical for the continued growth and development of the Indo-Pacific region.

Given the occurrence of rapid climate change and natural disasters, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) is another area that will need continued and focussed attention from all of us. India fully supports the implementation of various initiatives undertaken by the forum. India is also increasingly

shouldering its responsibilities in this area. We have emerged as first responders in HADR situations in the region on numerous occasions. India has also placed its capabilities at the disposal of our partners, and we continue to build regional capacities to deal with natural and humanitarian disasters.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished colleagues,

Capacity-building among the ASEAN countries to addressing all these shared security challenges needs to be accelerated. Expert Working Groups (EWGs) have proved to be an important cog in the ADMM wheel and have served us well in the identified areas. They can do more in terms of capacity building.

We have had detailed and comprehensive discussions on “Regional security Architecture” under the umbrella of East Asia Summit workshops. A number of concepts and ideas have been proposed by the member countries. India has also actively taken part in these workshops and put forward its Proposal of “A Dialogue-Centered Asia-Pacific Security Architecture”. We share the common view that we need to continue discussions for strengthening regional security architecture whilst keeping ASEAN centrality at its core.

I also whole-heartedly welcome annual meetings of the ADMM Plus instead of biennial meetings. This would lead to added opportunities to develop co-operative mechanisms capable of delivering tangible outcomes. Operationally, we also hope that there

would be greater complementarity and synergy with other forums, especially the EAS.

Let me conclude by expressing India's deep commitment and continued contribution for the realisation of the objectives set by this august forum. We wish Philippines all the very best for the upcoming Summits.

This is my first foreign visit since taking over as Defence Minister of India last month. I look forward to exchange views on practical cooperation and new learnings from my more experienced Ministerial colleagues.

Thank you!