



COUNTRY REPORT: MALAYSIA
By Captain Datuk Sharuddin bin Hj Omar (Ret)
President
Veterans Association of Malaysian Armed Forces (VAMAF)

SALUTATION

- Excellency Brig Gen Somphon KEOMIXAY, VECONAC President cum the President of the Lao National Veterans Federation, the host of the VECONAC 18th General Assembly,
- Excellency Lt Col Khamsing Sosenginh, the Secretary General of VECONAC,
- Excellency Brig Jen Khamphang Kongchanseng, the Treasurer General of VECONAC,
- Excellencies VECONAC Vice Presidents and Head of Delegations,
- Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

INTRODUCTION

1 First of all allow me on behalf of the Persatuan Veteran ATM (PVATM) or Veterans Association of Malaysian Armed Forces (VAMAF) delegations to extend our warmest regards and gratitude to the President and Head of Delegations as well as the distinguished delegates and observers from all VECONAC Member Associations who are present here today.

2 It is my privilege to extend our sincerest appreciation and gratitude to the leadership of the Lao National Veterans Federation (LNVF) for a very warm welcome and hospitality accorded to our delegations during our arrival, and also while attending this very significant occasion in promoting the ASEAN spirit of cordial relationship.

3 It is in this jubilant and cordial atmosphere, I would like to share with you briefly on the latest development in our country and in our own organization as well as all our efforts in looking after the Veterans affairs in Malaysia.

4 First of all, as you all know that Malaysia is now having a new government since the last General Election on the 9th May 2018. The Pakatan Harapan Party (PH) headed by Tun Mahathir Muhammad, a 93 years old Former Prime Minister, successfully unseated democratically the incumbent Barisan Nasional Party (BN) by the peoples popular votes. The new government has shown their interest in looking after the welfare of Veterans, however, due to financial constraints the government is presently unable to meet our demands in

providing better facilities to Veterans. But the new Defence Minister who is well known as a jovial and sympathetic person, has declared publicly that he will look into whatever we have asked for when the economic situation getting better.

5 Our association's "policy direction" remained clear and intact since its inception, that is "Providing an undivided loyalty and fullest support to the government of the day regardless from which party they come from, particularly in matters pertaining to the nation buildings. At the same time, we will continue to accord our highest respects and appreciations to the present and past leaders of the country."

6 As an "Umbrella Association" to all 398,030 Veterans in Malaysia, we will continue to engaging our federal and state government on matters pertaining to Veterans' welfare and socio economic issues. As mentioned earlier, both the present and past government have shown their willingness to work together with us in looking after the interest of all Veterans in Malaysia, regardless of their political affiliation and social fabrics.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NEW LINEUP

7 The PVATM organizational structure remained intact as per our last briefing, where we are organised into 14 divisions and 245 branches located throughout the country. Our headquarters with 36 working staffs is located in our own Wisma Pahlawan building (Warriors Tower) in the city of Kuala Lumpur, operating during working days from Monday to Friday from 0830am to 5.00pm.

8 The 92nd General Assembly was held on 3 Nov 2018 and one of the main agenda was the election of office bearers for term 2018-2021. The delegates have harmoniously elected the followings to be members of the Executive Committee for Term 2018-2021:

- 8.1 Capt. **Datuk Sharuddin** bin Hj Omar (Ret): President.
- 8.2 Maj. **Dato' Hj Sazali** bin Hj Ismail (Ret) : Deputy President.
- 8.3 Capt. **Abdul Latiff** bin Mohd Nor (Ret) : Vice President.
- 8.4 Maj Gen **Datuk Mohamad Zaki** Hamzah (Ret): Vice President.
- 8.5 Capt. **Dato' Yusof** bin Yaacob (Ret) : Vice President.

9 Thereafter the President appointed the following as members of the Executive Committee:

- 9.1 Lt Col **Tajul Ariffin** Chu Johari (Ret) : Secretary General.
- 9.2 Maj **Abu Kassim** bin Jadi (Ret) : Treasurer.

10 Being the National Veterans Association, we have been continuously and relentlessly working towards providing better welfare services to all Veterans in Malaysia by working hand-in-hand with the Defence Minister office as well as with the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Ministry of Defence. Our main focus is looking into areas where we can further upgrade facilities given to Veterans particularly the less privileged and handicapped group as well as Veterans' widows that are in dire need of assistance.

GOVERNING BODY FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS

11 For general information, the governing body or framework for Veterans in Malaysia is the Veterans Act 2012 or Act 740. As required by the Veterans Act, the National Veterans Council was formed and chaired by the Minister for Defence. The government has decreed that the main pillars of Veterans Affairs are the Veterans Affairs Department in the Ministry of Defence (JHEV), the Ex Service Affairs Incorporated (PERHEBAT) and the Veterans Association of Malaysian Armed Forces (PVATM). The three agencies are working closely in charting the makeup of officers and soldiers after they leave the Service, i.e. **from resettlement training to job placements as well as post retirement training, and payment of pension and subsistence allowances as well as monitoring the situation on the ground.** So far this initiative has worked very well in coordinating Veterans activities pre-retirement as well as post-retirement.

12 The total number of Veterans in Malaysia at the moment is 398,030 which is divided into three groups, and they are:

12.1	Veterans with Pension Scheme	:	121,000
12.2	Veterans without Pension	:	265,490
12.3	Veterans Discharged on Disciplinary Grounds	:	11,540
	TOTAL		398,030

13 Within the three groups, they are further divided into six categories, and are as follows:

- 13.1 Veterans on Armed Forces Pension scheme.
- 13.2 Veterans on Armed Forces Pension scheme plus Disability Pension (injured during First and Second Emergency against the insurgencies).
- 13.3 Veterans on Medical Board Pension scheme.
- 13.4 Veterans without Pension (leaving the service before 21 years of service).
- 13.5 Veterans on Public Service Pension.
- 13.6 Veterans discharged on disciplinary grounds.

POST-ACTIVE SERVICE PRIVILEGES AND BENEFITS

14 The Malaysia Government is very sympathetic towards the living conditions of soldiers after they left the service. Hence, the Veterans are provided with the following benefits:

- 14.1 Monthly pension for those serving 21 years and more, and the pension will be passed on to widows upon Veterans death.
- 14.2 Monthly subsistence allowance to handicapped and less privileged among Non-Pensioners and Widows (household monthly income must be less than RM1,050).
- 14.3 Free medical treatment for life for Veterans and families in military and public hospitals.

- 14.4 Free medical support system and equipment as and when required.
- 14.5 Immediate monetary assistance to all Veterans and Widows involved in natural disaster; such as flood, typhoon and fire.
- 14.6 One-Time monetary assistance to Veterans' children enrolling in local public universities and colleges.
- 14.7 Building low-cost houses for homeless veterans under the National Blue Ocean Strategy 7 (NBOS7) Initiative.
- 14.8 Repair and maintenance of houses damaged during the cause of natural disaster under the NBOS7 Initiative

15 We had many discussion with the former government in trying to find ways and means on how to implement the 10 issues stipulated in the Veterans Blueprint 2015. We are yet to know whether the Blueprint will remain intact or will be reviewed by the newly elected Government particularly by the Minister for Defence. However, we will continue to put pressure on the government to meet our demands. We have requested the Government to focus in implementing at least three main issues, and are as follows:

- 15.1 Firstly, the need to address issue on pension disparity, where we want the government to review the Veterans' Pension Scheme with the aim of reducing the gap in the amount of pension received by Veterans retired before the year 2004 and retired after 2004 in the same rank. We reckoned that the disparity percentage is around 50% to 80%.
- 15.2 Secondly, extending the period of "derivative pension" from 20 to 50 years given to the widows married by Veterans during retirement, but this is only applicable to first wife. However, the derivative pension given to windows married by Veterans during Service will remain for life.
- 15.3 Thirdly, providing a fixed yearly cash incentive to all non-pensionable Veterans with the aim of helping them in coping with the high cost of living. They are to be given a monthly subsistence allowance automatically when they reach the age of 60 and above, and those below 60 years of age be given a yearly cash incentive of RM2,000.00.

16 We are very happy to inform that the previous federal government has provided us an Annual Grant of RM1.5 million since 2013, and with that annual grant we are able to continue administering our Association at national and state level. However, with the prevailing financial difficulty faced by the government, we are not sure for now whether the present government will continue to provide us the same assistance next year and the years to come. On the same note, our divisions and branches at state level are also receiving financial assistance from their respective states.

WARRIOR FUND CAMPAIGN

17 The Warrior Fund Campaign was first introduced in 1950 by the Ex British Soldiers in Malaya. The campaign period is from 31st July to 31st December every year. Last year, we managed to solicit RM7.8 million, and the amount collected inclusive of the "one-off" contribution of RM5.0 million by the previous government. With that amount of fund have enable us to continue providing welfare assistance to the less privileged Veterans and Widows as well as Orphanage Children across the country.

18 As at today, we have implemented eight (8) Coordinated Welfare Assistance Initiatives (CWAI) and are as follows:

- 18.1 Providing a yearly contribution to disabled Veterans.
- 18.2 Providing a yearly contribution to disable Widows.
- 18.3 Providing a yearly contribution to disabled Children.
- 18.4 Providing a Monthly Subsistence Allowance to Ex-Soldiers discharged under disciplinary grounds who are in dire need of assistance for a living.
- 18.5 Providing immediate monetary assistance to all Veterans and Widows involved in natural disaster; such as flood, typhoon and fire.
- 18.6 Providing wheelchairs and walking sticks to those in needs.
- 18.7 Providing an annual grant to Veterans Orphanage Hostels.
- 18.8 Providing a "one-off" burial assistance to widows or the next-of kin of passing Ex-Soldiers (those dismissed on disciplinary ground).

PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL DAN STATE LEVEL ACTIVITIES

19 As a national association, we have always been invited to take part in all activities organized by the federal and state government. For year 2018, we have so far participated in three main activities, and the activities are:

- 19.1 On **31 July 2018**, Warrior Day Parade at National level attended by the Supreme King together with Cabinet Members and at State level attended by the respective State's Kings and Governors.
- 19.2 On 31 August 2018, National Day Parade at National level attended by the Supreme King together with Cabinet Members and at State level attended by the respective State's Kings and Governors.
- 19.3 On **16 September 2018**, Malaysia Day Parade and Celebration in the State of Sabah and Sarawak.

CONCLUSION

20 Last but not least, our Association is fully committed in maintaining and enhancing the existing relationship within VECONAC members, and that our priorities are solidarity and cooperation in bringing stability and peaceful environment in the ASEAN region. We will continue to promote the Veterans Interactive Program (VIP) among member countries in furthering the ASEAN solidarity efforts. In this respect, we have translated it into having an annual Bilateral Visit program between VAMAF and SAFVL since 2016.

21 On the same note, let all of us not forget our comrades who had sacrificed their lives and blood in safeguarding our respective country's sovereignty and security, Their contributions had one way or another contributed in bringing peace and stability within our region. Hence, it is our obligation to remember and appreciate their service to our respective country by attending to their widows and children needs and wellbeing.

22 Finally, once again we would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the VECONAC President and his staffs as well as the organising committee from the Lao National Veterans Federation who have done a tremendous effort in making this 18th General Assembly a success. And to the rest of our brothers and sisters who are here today, we wish and pray for your good health and prosperity as well as a safe journey home.

Thank you.

"VECONAC FOREVER – FOREVER VECONAC"