



**VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIAN ARMED FORCE
(Persatuan Veteran ATM)**

COUNTRY REPORT FOR YEAR 2019

**BY CAPT. DATUK SHARUDDIN BIN HJ OMAR (RET)
PRESIDENT**



His Excellency General KUN KIM Senior Minister, cum the President of VECONAC
His Excellency General Meas Savan, the VECONAC Secretary General
Excellencies Head of Delegates
Delegates and Observers
Ladies and Gentlemen

GREETINGS

1 May I, first of all, express our deepest feelings of gratitude to the Almighty God for his blessing that we are assembled here today in good health and in Great Spirit of friendship and cooperation.

2 On behalf of the delegates and observers of the Veterans Association of Malaysian Armed Forces, it is with great honour and pleasure for me to extend my most sincere and warmest greetings to all Head of Delegates, Delegates and Observers attending the 19th VECONAC General Assembly in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia. I thank our host Cambodia Veterans Associations (CVA) for the warm welcome and marvellous hospitality accorded to us throughout our stay in Phnom Penh.

PREAMBLE

3 We are very much aware of the current International Atmosphere and there is every reason to be concerned and alarmed about the escalation of economic or trade war between super powers. Economic difficulties are plaguing practically all countries in the world including the United State, in this connection I hope all us remain focus and vigilant in facing the situation of uncertainty.

4 We ought to put strong emphasis on the need for consolidation within the framework of our Confederation, and also for the implementation of matters yet to be realized and the need to prepare and setting up of next programme of activities. In this respect, Veterans Association of Malaysian Armed Forces (VAMAF) has, therefore, endeavoured into various initiatives to remain committed in further improving the living conditions of our Veterans.

CATEGORY OF VETERANS IN MALAYSIA

5 Veterans in Malaysia are governed by the Veterans Act 740 which was passed by Parliament in 2012. There are government agencies looking after the socio economy and welfare of Veterans in Malaysia. They are Veterans Affairs Department (JHEV) in the Ministry of Defence who is looking after the welfare and payments of pensions, and Ex-Service Affairs Incorporated (PERHEBAT) who is looking after the resettlement or pre-settlement trainings for servicemen and servicewomen about to leave the service as well as post-settlement trainings for Veterans.

6 Before I proceed further with my briefing, please allow me to brief you on the categories or types of Veterans we have in Malaysia. They are as follows (Annex A):

- 6.1 Veterans with Service or Military Pension (122,000 Veterans).
- 6.2 Veterans without Military Pension (178,000 Veterans).
- 6.3 Veterans without Military Pension but they have Civilian Pension for working in the Government Sector after leaving the Service, i.e. on second career program (5,000 Veterans).
- 6.4 Veterans with Military Service Pension plus Disabled Military Pension.
- 6.5 Veterans with Medical Board Pension.
- 6.6 Ex-Soldiers who were dismissed under various disciplinary grounds (total 21,000 Ex-Soldiers).

VETERANS CONTINUOUS CONTRIBUTION TO NATION BUILDING

7 Although the Veterans are no longer on active service, they are still considered as an asset to the Government of the day. With all the skills and experiences they have, the Veterans can still contributes toward the Nation Building particularly in the Defence sector. Hence, we in VAMAF have worked closely with the Government to compliment this existing defence mechanism and asset on the followings (Annex B):

- 7.1 Veterans as a Second-Line Defence Forces or Ready-Reserve Force.
- 7.2 Veterans as an Eye and Ears to the Government (Surveillance).
- 7.3 Veterans as a Facilitator in dissemination of information regarding Government Policies for implementation.

7.4 Veterans as an Agent to the Government in dissemination of Government Initiatives to netizens particularly that will benefits the Veterans themselves.

8 So far, the above Veterans Initiative have been well received by the government and the Ministry of Defence has been tasked to expound and collaborate on the matter.

GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION TOWARDS VETERANS

9 In recognising and appreciating Veterans' services towards the Nation, the Government has mandated to provide the following facilities to Veterans and their families (Annex C):

- 9.1 Building of Hospitals and Polyclinics for Veterans.
- 9.2 Establishing of Care Homes for disadvantaged Veterans.
- 9.2 Providing efficient Medical Benefits throughout Veterans' life.
- 9.4 Upgrading of Veterans' social economic status through an Entrepreneurship Programs, and amongst others are providing Post-Retirement Trainings and interest-free loan as start-up capital in business ventures.
- 9.5 Accreditation of Certificates and Diplomas awarded by Ex-Service Affairs Incorporated (a Pre-Settlement Training Institution) by private sectors and industries.
- 9.6 Providing and facilitating Veterans with employment after they retired from Service through a Second Career Initiative Programs upon the completion of Pre-Retirement Trainings.

10 So far, most of the Government pledges have been implemented by the Ministry of Defence and were coordinated by the various defence related agencies such as Veterans Affairs Department, Veterans Provident Fund Board (LTAT) and Ex-Service Affair Incorporated (PERHEBAT) as well as VAMAF.

WELFARE PROGRAM AND INITIATIVE

11 The Veterans Association of Malaysian Armed Forces or VAMAF in short has not been spared the economic uncertainty condition which has affected the World and the ASEAN region as a whole. Although we have to minimise our activities and trim our expenditure to a certain level in most areas in facing the economic challenges, nevertheless, and God willing, we have managed to continue with our welfare programs and initiatives for members in need of support as well as asset development programs for purpose of generating income.

12 In spite of the financial challenges, we managed to sustain and continue our financial aids to the less fortunate Veterans and their dependents. Annual and monthly financial aids to needy members and their families have been carried out without any let up, and are as follows (Annex D):

- 12.1 Yearly contribution to the Disabled Veterans in dire need of support (4,500 Veterans).
- 12.2 Yearly contribution to Disabled Veterans' Widows (560 Veterans' Widows).
- 12.3 Yearly Contribution to Disabled Veterans' Children (1,450 Veterans' Children).
- 12.4 Monthly contribution of Living or Sustainance Allowance to Disadvantaged Ex-Soldiers and Widows, mostly involving Ex-Service personnel dismissed under disciplinary ground (25 Ex-Service and Widows).
- 12.5 Natural disaster relief assistance, i.e. the victims of flood and typhoon as well as fire (5,000 Veterans and Widows).
- 12.6 Providing medical items and equipment, such as wheelchairs, walking stick and pampers.
- 12.7 Providing funeral or burial expenses to those who are not qualified under government funded initiative (100 Ex-Soldiers per year).
- 12.8 Yearly financial grant to the Veterans' Orphanage Hostel (60 Orphanage Children).

VETERANS' SOCIAL SAFETY NET

13 I am glad to inform that we have been persistently in our approach to get the Government to give due recognition to Veterans. In ensuring that the Veterans are continuously recognised and appreciated by the government, we have urged the government to look into and implement the following measures (Annex E):

13.1 Power of Armed Forces Council (AFC). To reinstating the power of Armed Forces Council in making policy direction, employment of the Armed Forces and formulating policy, rule and instruction on pay and emolument, payment of gratuities and pension for the Armed Forces which related to determine the amount of pension going to be receive by Veterans. At the moment the AFC which directly under His Royal Highness the Yang Di Pertuan Agung (Supreme King) seems to be subservient to Political Masters and Department of Civil Service.

13.2 **Pension Review.** The pension disparity between those pensioned before year 2004 and after year 2004 is more than 50% ,and it needs to be reviewed. We have urged the Government to reduce the gap gradually, and also want the Government to study whether it is viable to introduce new pension system called "One Rank-One Pension (OROP)".

13.3 **Monitory Assistance to Non-Pensioners.** Recognising that due to the high cost of living, most Non-Pensioners are now fall into "Poverty Group" or B40 Group set by the Government. We urge the Government to provide a yearly bonus to this group, and they are to be given Monthly Subsistence Allowance automatically when they reach the age of 60.

13.4 **Extending Derivative Pension Period.** Currently Derivative Pension has been extended to widows married by Veteran during retirement, however, the duration is limited to 20 years effective from the date of Veterans leaving the Service. We urge the government to extend the Derivative Pension period from 20 years to 50 years.

13.5 **Pardon Board or Tribunal.** Some Servicemen and Servicewomen were dismissed due to disciplinary grounds, and in accordance to the Veteran Act 740 they are not entitled to be recognised as Veteran. Hence, they and families are not entitled to enjoy all facilities provided by Government for Veterans. We urge the Government to establish a Pardon Board or Tribunal to relook into their individual case, and they should be pardoned after five years from the date of dismissal if they are not involved in any act of treason.

13.6 **Upgrading of Medicare Facilities.** We urge the government to further improve the medical facilities and treatment given to Veterans and family through the existing Military Hospitals and Clinics. We want the waiting time for treatment and dispensing of medicine to Veterans by Military Hospitals and Clinic to be reduced. We also want the hospital and clinics to establish a special lane and waiting area for Veterans while waiting their turn to get treatment.

13.7 **Veterans Hospital and Clinics.** We urge the Government to speed up in the construction of Veterans Hospital and Polyclinics on regional basis and the first hospital is to be built in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur.

13.8 **Veterans Care Home.** We urge the Government to speed up in the construction of Veterans Care Homes on regional basis, and the first care home is to be in Kuala Lumpur. The care home must be built in areas closed to the Military and Veterans Hospital.

13.9 **Special Allowance for "Pingat Jasa Malaysia (Malaysia Service Medal) Recipients.** All Military Officers and Soldiers serving during period of Emergency from 1968 to 1989 are given a special commemorative medal "Pingat Jasa Malaysia" by His Majesty the Supreme King. They are officers and soldiers who fought against the terrorists and insurgencies during the Emergency Period, and their service to the nation during the difficult period should be recognized and appreciated in the form of a special monthly allowance accorded to them.

14 Our constant and relentless efforts in voicing the problems and the well-being of Veterans have attracted more Veterans in Malaysia to become member of our Association. To date, we have 165,500 Veterans, i.e. more than 55% of Veterans population, and they are distributed among 14 states/regions which, among themselves, have 244 branches throughout the country.

DEFENCE WHITE PAPER

15 A short information on Defence White Paper (DWP) for general knowledge. Malaysia's first DWP was tabled in the Malaysia Parliament on 3 Dec 2019 outlining two roles for the Armed Forces, i.e. Primary and Secondary roles. It will also set the direction of the national defence strategy for period 2020 until 2030 to protect country's interests and defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Changes in the defence industry and career in the Military field are outlines in the DWP comprising three job opportunities that would be created, including careers in Military, and Defence Industry as well as a second career for Veterans.

16 Specifically, the Government said that the Second Career for the Veterans is aimed at looking after the welfare of Veterans and providing space for them to share their skills, experience and knowledge in the country's economic development. At the same time, the DWP was a strategic thinking policy that would guide all defence agencies to plan and execute in their areas of interest, including the future direction and employment of Veterans in the defence of the country.

17 In the context of job opportunities for Veterans, we hope that more second career opportunities will be created in an effort to elevating Veterans' socio economic status will be achieved. It is hope that Veterans skills and experiences could be leveraged in the Total Defence Concept promoted by the DWP.

BUSINESS VENTURES

18 Repeating what have been said many years ago, VAMAF fully supports the idea of VECONAC to endeavouring in business joint-ventures within VECONAC entity for purpose of generating income on a Win-Win principle. We strongly believe that the proposed joint-ventures can be effectively pursued through "Government to Government (G to G)" channels or on "Association to Association (A to A)" channels. We hope the committee on economy during this General Assembly had explored further on this issue of Business Ventures.

TRIBUTE TO THE OUT-GOING PRESIDENT

19 At this right moment, I on behalf of VAMAF Supreme Council Members we like to express our sincere and heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to General Kun Kim, the President of VECONAC and his executive staff the Secretary General and Tresurer General for their tireless efforts and leadership in continuously moulding VECONAC to its height as it is today. Your splendid leadership and team-work in realising the VECONAC Vision, Mission and Goals is second to none.

PLEDGE TO INCOMING PRESIDENT

20 To the In-Coming President, "Welcome on Board, Sir". Please be rest assured that we shall give all the support needed, and our fullest cooperation that you may need from time to time. We are very confident that you will continue to purse what is left to be done and will also steer VECONAC to next level of achievement.

CONGULATORY MESSAGE TO LVRI NEW LEADERSHIP

21 Here today, we would like to congratulate and welcome the followings LVRI new Office Bearers:

21.1 Maj Gen (Ret) Saiful Sulun as President of VRI.

21.2 Maj Gen (Ret) Bantu Hardjijo as Vice President of LVRI.

21.3 Air Vice Marshal (Ret) FX. Soejitno as Secretary General of LVRI.

21.4 First Admiral (Ret) Maryono MA as Treasurer General of LVRI.

CONCLUSION

22 In conclusion, once again VAMAF wishes to congratulate and record our utmost appreciation to the Cambodia Veterans Association (CVA) for the splendid organization in hosting the 19th VECONAC General Assembly. We also thank CVA for the marvellous hospitality in making our stay in Phnom Penh so memorable and very comfortable.

23 Finally, I hope that the spirit of friendship, cordial relationship and solidarity amongst us in VECONAC will be kept alive and continue to flourish forever and ever.

"VECONAC FOREVER – FOREVER VECONAC"

Thank you, and Salam.