NEWS HIGHLIGHT

“Five to Life: Journey of Partnership and Progress”

NEWS STORY

- RSIS: AHA Centre Policy Discussion on the World Humanitarian Summit Implications for Asia-Pacific
- The First ACE Programme Annual Conference 2016
- ROHAN Conference
- The ASEAN Regional Disaster Exercise (ARDEX) 2016

INSIGHTS

- Key Elements of an Effective Leadership by Mr. Said Faisal
“Five to Life: Journey of Partnership and Progress”
– Milestones of the Development of the AHA Centre

The Southeast Asia region has a uniqueness in terms of its geographic location as it consists across more than four million square kilometres, made up of active volcanoes, tropical islands that are surrounded by coral reefs, rainforest, mountain ranges and vast open plains. The characteristics of Asean made its location as a disaster-prone area for small or large scale disasters that might occur without warning. The AHA Centre was formed to perform a mandate as the key coordinator for disaster management and emergency response within the ASEAN region.

There were more than 350,000 people lost their lives caused by disasters across the Asean region during the period of 2004 – 2014. The immense number of people being affected made the Asean Member States (AMS) to realise that the partnership amongst them should tap into the management of disasters, provide mutual support to save lives. The concern of disaster management was actually considered as an important topic since 1976. During the birth of the Declaration of Asean Concord 1 and the Declaration on Mutual Assistance on Natural Disasters.

There were a few discussions occurred within the period between 1967 – 2003, until the Asean Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) was formed as a transformation from Asean expert working Group on Disaster Management – following the Declaration of Asean Concord II. ACDM represented the legal and factual aspects of the Asean Centre.

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In 2004, discussions amongst AMS in regards with a cross-border mutual “arrangement” of disaster management were discussed. The discussion was concluded quite uniquely – as the ACDM would like to anticipate further direction from the members. The journey did not end at the establishment of the AHA Centre. Members of the ACDM and the Governing Board of the AHA Centre continued to handle several challenges and efforts to maximise the operationalisation of the AHA Centre. The AHA Centre received numerous supports from international and regional organisations, including the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) and other relevant governments and bodies that are responsible for handling disaster from each of the AMS.

The Policy Discussion engaged different stakeholders from the academies, civil-society organisations, think-tanks, the Asean Secretariat and the UN Agency. The Policy Discussion aimed to discuss the outcomes of the WHS, what has been achieved, the remaining gaps and challenges, and to what extent the WHS outcome document and the Asean Vision 2025 on disaster management are mutually reinforcing. The discussion was held as part of the series of events commemorating the fifth anniversary of the AHA Centre.
The AHA Centre Executive (ACE) Programme is a six-month capacity-building programme on disaster management organised by the AHA Centre with the support of the Government of Japan. The ACE Programme was designed exclusively for disaster management officials throughout the ASEAN.

The first ACE Programme was conducted in 2014 and has continued the programme has formed 45 graduates as of 2016 who are the future leaders of disaster management. This year marks the first ACE Programme Annual Conference that brought together all graduates of the ACE Programme to engage in discussion and group activities to provide policy inputs, recommendations and alternative solutions to the ongoing and potential challenges of ASEAN regional mechanisms on disaster management.

Meanwhile, the last session is called ‘the new horizon’ as the panellists in session three examined the regional governance architecture and identified areas of focus to achieve the ASEAN Vision 2025 on disaster management. Moderated by Mr. Markus Wierna from UNOCHA, the last session’s panellists were Ms. Jessica Ear from Asia Pacific Centre for Security Studies, Mr. Akhtar Cook, and Ms. Majly Anton from RSIS. Speakers delivered some valuable comments and reflections on the AHA Centre’s role to enhance its capacity in becoming the centre of excellence of disaster management in the ASEAN Region, as well as to maintain its positive progress in achieving the ASEAN Vision 2025 on disaster management.

Lastly, the session concluded with a suggestion statement by Dr. Maly Anton, Associate Professor and Head, Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, RSIS in regards the need of the AHA Centre to reach out to other communities within the ASEAN Member States (AMS).
It was a mix of many things. There was a sense of responsibility, a sense of obeying orders, and I saw it as a challenge to start this organisation from a brand new state. I was given an opportunity to work on this problem for a quite a time. It was challenging, undeniably, I remember the moment when I was being assigned by the Government of Indonesia to be the Executive Director of the Provisional of AHA Centre. It was just an empty office with one person and a laptop without any staff. But I was blessed by the people around me who supported the establishment of the AHA Centre. At that time, I would say that I was alone, but not lonely.

We believe that you must have attained many achievements throughout your career with the AHA Centre. What would your most notable achievement be? Can you share with us some information regarding that?

For me, I consider myself as just a man who gets the job done. The most notable one is what you can witness in the development of the AHA Centre since day one. Everything that we have accomplished is an achievement that needs to be grateful for, not to forget the fact that we are blessed by being surrounded by a ‘super team’. We were always lucky. It is not only about the relief items, but there is always a bigger meaning behind every deployment. We tried to deliver the meaning of togetherness, solidarity, unity, and the ‘we’ feeling amongst Member States. We managed to influence the government of the affected area and reduce their suffering.

In every deployment that I was participating, the main important thing that we need to ensure is for the affected people having ‘Hope’. One of the first things that those people need would probably be hoping to survive and have a better future. It is not only about the relief items, but there is always a bigger meaning behind every deployment. We tried to deliver the meaning of togetherness, solidarity, unity, and the ‘we’ feeling amongst Member States. We managed to influence the government of the affected area and reduce their suffering.

Lastly, if you could say something to your super team in the AHA Centre, what would it be?

I would like to say that we need to always have the passion to make AHA great and remember the purpose of the AHA Centre is to serve the Member States. We should continue to improve our spirit of always strive to be better and pursue the excellence particularly in the disaster management field. Also, the reputation and credibility of the AHA Centre should be maintained very well.

It will not be an easy journey – we can choose an easy journey, but I do not think that is the way we are here today. It is about a journey of excellence and making AHA a better place of solidarity and unity that uphold the ‘we’ feeling to achieve a greater ASEAN in disaster management.

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We need to work hard so that the team is not only a ‘team’ but also a ‘family’. We need to be united and work together to achieve the purpose of the AHA Centre.

The passion of doing the job that is expressed by a leader will spread across to the entire team and habitually create such environment that is constructive and encouraging enough to achieve the intended goal.
About ASEAN
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia. As set out in the ASEAN Declaration, the aims and purposes of ASEAN among others are to accelerate the economic growth, social progress, cultural development, to promote regional peace and stability as well as to improve active collaboration and cooperation.

About the AHA Centre
The AHA Centre is an inter-governmental organisation established on 17 November 2011, through the signing of the Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) by ASEAN Foreign Ministers, witnessed by the ASEAN Heads of States, from 10 ASEAN Member States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The Centre was set-up to facilitate the cooperation and coordination among ASEAN Member States and with the United Nations and international organisations for disaster management and emergency response in the ASEAN region.

About AADMER
The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) is a legally-binding regional multi-hazard and policy framework for cooperation, coordination, technical assistance and resource mobilisation in all aspects of disaster management in the 10 ASEAN Member States. The objective of AADMER is to provide an effective mechanism to achieve substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and in social, economic and environmental assets, and to jointly respond to emergencies through concerted national efforts.