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## Australia, Malaysia Strengthen Defence Ties at Kuala Lumpur Talks

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– *Categories: Defence & Security*

Australia and Malaysia have reaffirmed their commitment to deepening defence cooperation during the 5th Malaysia–Australia High Level Committee (HLC) Meeting, co-chaired in Kuala Lumpur on 21 August 2025 by Malaysia’s Defence Minister Dato’ Seri Haji Mohamed Khaled bin Nordin and Australia’s Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles.

The meeting underscored the long-standing defence partnership between the two countries, highlighting shared history and a commitment to regional security. Ministers described defence cooperation as a key pillar of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, noting milestones including 80 years since the end of World War II, 75 years since Australia’s assistance during the Malayan Emergency, and 70 years of Australia’s diplomatic presence in Malaysia.

Central to bilateral cooperation is the Malaysia–Australia Joint Defence Programme (MAJDP), which facilitates joint training, education, and military exercises. Ministers also welcomed progress on infrastructure upgrades at Malaysia’s Royal Malaysian Air Force Base in Butterworth, supported by Australia.

The talks highlighted the importance of Operation GATEWAY, now in its 45th year, which plays a vital role in maritime surveillance and regional stability. Both sides agreed to strengthen the operation further in response to evolving security challenges. They also confirmed plans to advance a Malaysia–Australia Security of Information Arrangement.

Maritime security was a recurring theme, with both countries reaffirming their support for freedom of navigation and adherence to international law under UNCLOS. The ministers expressed concern over developments in the South China Sea, including unsafe activities at sea and in the air, and called for disputes to be resolved peacefully.

Ministers also highlighted ongoing cooperation within ASEAN frameworks, such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus and the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA). Australia will participate in Exercise BERSAMA LIMA 2025, where its F-35 Lightning II aircraft will be deployed for the second consecutive year.

The discussions also addressed wider regional challenges, including cybersecurity, terrorism, and violent extremism. Malaysia's role as ASEAN Chair in mediating a ceasefire between Cambodia and Thailand was acknowledged, with Marles expressing appreciation for Malaysia's leadership.

Both governments reaffirmed their commitment to a stable, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific, emphasising open dialogue and practical measures to prevent conflict.

The next High Level Committee Meeting will take place in Australia, with Minister Khaled invited to attend.