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JAKARTA: Malaysia has offered for the Maritime Institute of Malaysia (Mima) to be transformed into a centre of excellence for training and exchange of expertise for members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Razak said this was because Malaysia is of the view that IORA should have an institution that is capable of channelling and sharing experiences in tackling maritime-related issues.

"Malaysia has experience in the aspect of maritime security, like in the Malacca Strait, which is the busiest shipping lane in the world, with some 80,000 vessels plying the route annually.

"As such, issues like piracy, terrorism, human smuggling and trans-border crimes are related to the Malacca Strait and if not managed well, can affect world trade," he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking to Malaysian journalists after leading the Malaysian delegation to the IORA summit here today.

Najib added that in support of the Jakarta IORA Declaration on Prevention of Terrorism, Malaysia is also willing to share its expertise and experience in tackling the threat which has become very serious of late.

He said Malaysia proved its commitment in safeguarding the Malacca Strait when it set up the Framework on Joint Patrols in the Malacca Strait, together with Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand, which entailed air and sea surveillance apart from intelligence sharing.

He said the steps taken resulted in a drop in maritime-related crimes.

"For comparison, in 2015, there were 104 cases of piracy in the Malacca Strait, but last year, only one case was reported," he said.

Najib added that the summit also adopted a declaration called the Jakarta Concord, which centres on six areas, namely maritime security, facilitating trade and investment, fisheries management, disaster risk management, cooperation in science and technology, as well as tourism and culture.

Najib said in addition, the summit also reached a consensus on addressing two issues – the Blue Economy (shift society from scarcity to abundance by using innovative methods); and the Empowerment of Women's Economy.

In his address during the debate session of the summit, the Prime Minister also stressed the need for a plan of action to counter traditional and non-traditional threats in the Indian Ocean.

In conjunction with the summit, Najib also took the opportunity to hold a meeting with Australian Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull and Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena to discuss bilateral and regional issues of interests with the nations concerned.

The IORA Summit, with its theme of "Strengthening Maritime Cooperation for a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Indian Ocean", is the first meeting of the leaders of the member states, in conjunction with the 20th year of IORA.

IORA has 21 member states, comprising countries in the Indian Ocean, as well as seven Dialogue Partners, namely, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. -- BERNAMA