

## South China Sea, Rohingya on ASEAN map

The maritime dispute over the South China Sea, exodus of the Rohingya citizens of Myanmar into Bangladesh and India, North Korean nuclear posturing and Islamic State-linked terrorism are likely to be the key talking points at the 31st ASEAN summit beginning here on Monday.

The South China Sea has been at the centre of discussions on multilateral problems at the ASEAN-China level, which has been further complicated by China's land reclamation projects aimed at building air surveillance and domination projects in the region.

### Common future

ASEAN has been battling with the task of framing a Code of Conduct (CoC) for the common maritime future, which officials of the Philippines say is likely to get the green light during the ASEAN summit.

"We expect the leaders to announce the negotiations but the actual start of the negotiations will probably happen sometime next year," Foreign Affairs spokesperson Robespierre Bolivar said in a press interaction at the International Media Centre on Saturday.

Attention is also focused on Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, who arrived here on Saturday, and is expected to present her country's stand on the Rohingya issue.

### Rohingya crisis

A Bangladeshi source told *The Hindu* that Dhaka expected ASEAN to raise the issue in a prominent way and convince Myanmar to stop the atrocities against the Rohingya. It is likely to be a major issue at the "retreat" where leaders can speak freely about all issues away from the media glare.

"It will be discussed, it will be up to Myanmar to raise the issue because this is a domestic concern for them," said Mr. Bolivar giving the official position of the Philippines.

The presence of the pro-Islamic State militants in the Marawi city in southern Philippines is also expected to receive attention as the fight with the militants has been a major domestic issue of the Philippines. The developments in Marawi have also emerged as a reason for it to seek international support. China has in recent months extended support to the Philippines.

### Counter-terrorism

"China also provided timely weaponry assistance in the counter-terrorism campaign in Marawi, and on the second day after the campaign successfully concluded, Chinese engineering machinery were delivered for local reconstruction," said Premier Li Keqiang of China in a newspaper article.

It is expected that the simmering tension between the North Korea and the U.S. and Japan will also feature prominently on Monday's talks.

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