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Najib-Tokyo

TERRORISM IS NOT THE BIGGEST THREAT IN ASIA, SAYS NAJIB

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 30 (Bernama) -- Terrorism is not the biggest danger that lurks in East Asia as the real challenge still lies in the non-traditional areas, such as transnational crimes, including piracy, environmental degradation and imbalanced growth.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said, however, terrorism still appeared in several parts of Southeast Asia with a sinister attempt by certain groups to establish a series of Islamic governments.

"There is no necessity to panic and overreact as this threat is very much under control. The groups are small and are isolated," he said in his speech at the Foreign Correspondence Club, Tokyo.

Najib is on a two-day working visit to Japan at the invitation of the Nippon Foundation and Sasakawan Peace Foundation.

In Malaysia's case for example, the government had taken a strong stand against any group and individual out to change the fabric of its multi-racial society, he said.

Najib said there still existed traditional flashpoints in the region, ranging from the Taiwan issue to the Korean peninsula, which remained one of the most militarised zones on earth.

"We acknowledge and commend Prime Minister (Junichiro) Koizumi's initiative towards North Korea. Despite that country being identified by the Americans as being part of the so-called 'axis of evil', Japan has decided to go ahead and use diplomacy and engagement as viable tools, rather than force and isolation, which others tend to prefer," he said.

By engaging North Korea, Japan had narrowed the gap that once existed and had long become a source of uncertainty and threat, he said.

This was the kind of initiatives which Asian countries should pursue for this will be a good lesson for others to follow. Asia must show the direction towards peace, if others in the west preferred the direction towards war, he said.

"Construction is far better than destruction and Asia should show the way forward. In this regard, Japan has indeed taken an important step," Najib said.

Malaysia is certainly supportive and will pursue similar goals of putting engagement at the forefront of our regional policy.

He said the policy had worked for example in Myanmar where Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had long advocated the idea of engagement, rather than isolation.

-- BERNAMA

SLR AHH AO