

Tackling IS more difficult than tackling communists, says Zahid

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Tackling the Islamic State (IS) threat is more difficult than dealing with the communist insurgency that Malaysia faced before, said Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

"In the past, we had the experience of facing the communists together with those western countries which faced the same threat," he told *Bernama* after attending the Asia-Europe Counter-Terrorism Dialogue in Singapore today.

"This time (in facing the IS threat), we don't have the experience. Sharing (of experience) with the Middle Eastern countries is limited due to the constraint of differences in religious ideology as Malaysia is an Islamic country that practices moderate ideology," he said.

Earlier, Ahmad Zahid who is also home minister, was one of the key speakers at the dialogue, sharing the stage with Germany's Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Dr Gunter Krings MdB.

They spoke on the topic, 'New Threat Landscape in Asia and Europe'.

Ahmad Zahid said Malaysia was willing to share with Europe its deradicalisation module which had successfully deradicalised some 240 detainees for the past 10 years.

"It is about 97.5 percent successful rate," he said.

"We have applied our extensive knowledge in countering subversive elements during our fight against the communists to come up with a highly effective programme," he added.

Ahmad Zahid said an Integrated Deradicalisation for Terrorists programme had been developed by the Home Ministry, Prisons Department and the Royal Malaysian Police.

"Currently, it is being used by us in deradicalising apprehended terrorists in Malaysia.

"This is a crucial time for us to strengthen our cooperation and friendship with Europe in encountering the threat of IS.

"What Asia and Europe have done so far are only prevention efforts but yet to yield results in determining the root cause of terrorism," he said.

To a question from the audience on when and how the IS threat could be resolved, Ahmad Zahid replied: "Understand the Muslims (as IS has always being associated with Muslims)."

"We need to find the root cause; why terrorism is happening, first. Why Islamophobia exists.

"Islam promotes peace. Anything against it is not the way of Islam," said Ahmad Zahid who read a specific verse in the Quran about peace.

Ahmad Zahid also highlighted how Singapore as a non-Muslim country is treating Muslims well.

"For example, the Singapore government is taking good care of the mosques here," he said.

He also said that Malaysia as a moderate Muslim country had a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society living together in peace.

- *Bernama*

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