

Zahid: UK keen to promote M'sia's 'Wassatiyyah' initiative

MalaysiaKini.com

Nov 9th, 2016

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Malaysia's initiative on moderation known as 'Wassatiyyah' has attracted the interest of the United Kingdom.

Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the UK had stated its interest to help promote the concept internationally in the effort to tackle terrorism.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said UK Home Secretary Amber Rudd disclosed this to him during their meeting in London yesterday.

"They in principle are willing to work with Malaysia to organise a convention on Wassatiyyah in UK itself.

"This to me is a recognition of the efforts made by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak to promote Islamic practice that are truly in line with the teachings of Islam," he told Malaysian journalists in London.

Ahmad Zahid, who is on a five-day working visit to the UK since Monday, said this development showed that the UK government appreciated the measures taken by Malaysia to tackle terrorism and also its system to promote harmony among Malaysia's multi-racial and multi-religious population.

In his discussion with Rudd on the concept of moderation, the deputy prime minister said he, among other, had also suggested that the UK appoint a mufti to find similarities between the followers of various sects in the UK to enable moderation programmes be implemented among the masses.

They also exchanged views on issues of common interest including terrorism and measures to address the problem that include de-radicalisation programme used by Malaysia.

Ahmad Zahid said his UK counterpart had also suggested that Malaysia host the Global Child Abuse Convention.

Hence, he said that he will ask Women, Family and Community Development Minister Rohani Abdul Karim to prepare a proposal to be approved by the prime minister and the cabinet.

Ahmad Zahid also held meetings with UK members of Parliament both from the House of Lords and House of Commons where they discussed steps that will be taken by the UK government when they are outside the European Union.

This was because they wanted trade and cooperation in various aspects between UK and

Malaysia to continue and be strengthened, he said.

There were also MPs who voiced their concerns about the possibility of terrorist groups from various Asean countries forming networks, he added.

"They fear that Asean will also be affected by terrorism as the groups want to establish a united Islamic state in the region.

"It certainly will disrupt existing agreements like the Five Powers Defence Arrangement (FPDA) between Malaysia, the UK, Australia, Singapore and New Zealand," he said.

However, Ahmad Zahid said the UK is committed to continue training and patrolling alongside the five countries involved in the defence agreement.

The DPM also said Malaysia would start making preparations to host the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2020, by taking steps to address issues of common interest such as climate change.

Ahmad Zahid last night attended a dinner with the Malaysia diaspora in the UK at the Felda-owned Hotel Park City Grand Plaza here. The dinner attended was by 400 Malaysians residing and working in UK as well as Malaysian students.

The Malaysian High Commission in London estimates that there are approximately 73,000 Malaysians living and working in the UK, excluding 17,632 students at various UK higher institutions.

- *Bernama*