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Joining hands to fight terror

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Meeting of minds: Najib and Obama sharing their views during a joint media conference after a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 27th Asean Summit.

US and M'sia to work together to combat extremism in the region

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia and the United States have agreed to work closely together to make this region safe with President Barack Obama and Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak sharing similar views on combating violence and terrorism.

"This region is not immune to threats or violence. There are groups here that have announced that they are aligned to the Islamic State. Malaysia's stand on this is clear. We don't condone IS, we are against IS and what it stands for," Najib said after the two leaders met for an hour here.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would work together with the United States and "other like-minded countries" to combat any form of violence and extremism in the region.

Malaysia, he said, would set up a messaging centre to counter terrorism online and would present counter narratives that reflect the true meaning of Islam.

Najib said both he and Obama shared similar positions as far as combating violence and terrorism

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Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak

was concerned.

To this, Obama commended Malaysia's willingness to host the centre that would use various tools including social media and engagement with scholars and clerics to counter IS.

The bilateral meeting also saw discussions centring around the need to respect international law in resolving territorial disputes and Malaysia's progress on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA).

After the closed-door session, the Malaysian media and the United

States' press corps were ushered in for remarks from the leaders.

On the issue of South China Sea, both Malaysia and the United States agreed on the need to apply the rule of law to resolve disputes.

"There are a number of claimants and (although) the US is not one of them, we strongly believe in the need to apply international norms to resolve maritime disputes.

"Asean has taken a common position and we look forward to working with the member nations to ensure basic rules apply.

"Freedom of navigation and free-flow of commerce have really been the foundation stone for extraordinary development of this region," Obama said.

Najib said Malaysia's stand on the matter has been consistent with the need to apply the rule of law and expressed hope that tensions in the area would not escalate and the rights of big and small nations would be respected.

He had also explained to Obama the domestic process to get the TPP endorsed, adding that its cost-bene-

fit analysis would be presented to the Cabinet next week.

"We will take it to Parliament in January at a special session and we hope the TPP will be ratified or put in operation in two years," he said.

The Prime Minister also took the opportunity to explain current developments in Malaysia and said the President had given his views on several issues.

"We take into account some of his views and concerns. Malaysia is committed to reforms and at the same time committed to ensuring peace and stability," he said.

Obama said it was good to be back in Malaysia and hoped that he had set a good example so future presidents of the United States would not wait for 50 years to come here.

"I discussed with the Prime Minister and we talked about the importance of civil societies not just here but the region. We spoke on how we can promote the values that will encourage continued development and opportunity and prosperity," he said.