

**#ASEAN: Handle IS Threat Collectively - Najib
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PUTRAJAYA, April 23 (Bernama) -- ASEAN needs to act collectively in handling the IS militant group threat as it cannot be countered by member countries acting alone, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He called for closer cooperation among the 10 members of ASEAN to ensure the influence and threat of the IS does not intimidate the stability and peace of the region.

"ASEAN can collectively and bilaterally strengthen cooperation to combat the threat of IS which cannot be handled by an individual nation," he said in an interview with Bernama ahead of the 26th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi on April 26 and 27.

He said ASEAN was in fact prepared as cooperation over the issue had been put in place via the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting as well as other platforms involving the home ministers, police and the armed forces.

Najib expected the issue to be touched on at the ASEAN heads of government meeting.

Taking a leaf from moderation, which has been accepted by ASEAN member countries, the Prime Minister said it should be fostered in the effort to maintain peace and harmony in the region.

"It should be imbued in messages or narratives during ASEAN conferences to remind all of us that if we want the region to be peaceful, we should reject fanaticism, extremism and militancy," he said.

He also pointed that such deviant thoughts were not the real teachings of any religion.

In the context of ASEAN, Najib said various religions and beliefs have long been practised in the region and it should not lead to conflicts and friction.

"This is the message we are disseminating not only during our chairmanship of ASEAN in 2015 but over a continuous period," said Najib.

With the theme 'Our People, Our Community, Our Vision, the Malaysian vision as chairman of ASEAN since Jan 1 is to create a people-focused ASEAN involving all sectors of the community in various activities.

ASEAN comprises of Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

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