

Singapore, Malaysia Discuss Cooperation, Efforts To Deal With ISIS Threat

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SINGAPORE, May 30 (Bernama) -- Singapore and Malaysia have discussed the need to cooperate and step up efforts to deal with the threat posed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

In a statement, the Ministry of Defence said the discussion was held during a meeting between Singapore's Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen and his Malaysian counterpart, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein on the sidelines of the 14th Asia Security Summit IISS Shangri-La Dialogue here Saturday.

Both ministers reaffirmed the close and long-standing defence relations between Singapore and Malaysia, and their strong commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA).

Dr Ng also held meetings with ministers and senior officials from Spain, Thailand, Timor-Leste, the United Kingdom and the United States, and hosted breakfast for ministers from the FPDA countries.

Earlier in his address at the summit's plenary session, Hishammuddin said, thus far, the attention of the global community had been defeating the so-called IS group of militants in its Iraqi and Syrian bases.

He said it was arguable that some of its most devastating impacts had been in other theatres of operation such as Africa, where groups or individuals inspired by the IS extremist ideology and philosophy of gory violence wreaked havoc in places such as Kenya, Nigeria and Somalia.

"Indeed, and even more worryingly the threat of IS-styled terrorism is very much alive and well in Southeast Asia.

In February this year, Hishammuddin noted a research conducted by the Nanyang Technological Institute of Singapore indicated there were some 300 net sites in the region linked to terror groups.

"Even more alarming are the widespread visual releases by these groups depicting bombings and beheadings in multiple languages.

"What is shocking is the fact that the reception towards these gruesome acts has been disturbingly encouraging.

Hishammuddin said it was widely reported that supporters of these groups had set a foothold in many countries in the Asia Pacific region, including Malaysia and ASEAN.

He said preventing the escalation of the IS conflict would hence, require not only containing and destroying its infrastructure in the Middle East but also stopping the spread of its ideology and activities in other parts of the world.

"For instance, care must be taken to ensure that the young and vulnerable do not fall prey to extremism.

"Winning the hearts and minds of such people requires us not only to address whatever political or socio-economic disparities they may be facing, but also doing something to increase their sense of dignity."

After all, the minister said, the various conflagrations of the Arab Spring were due to the failure of the various regimes in the region to protect their citizens honour and self-worth.

"How we judge the stability of a country should take into account this very important factor. Furthermore, we should not regard resolutions to conflicts as sustainable or viable, until and unless such solutions take into account and protect the dignity of all sides involved," added Hishammuddin.

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