

**ASEAN Needs To Address New Transnational Crime Thoroughly - Ahmad Zahid
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 29 (Bernama) -- The new development in transnational crime as identified by the United Nations (UN) has to be addressed thoroughly by ASEAN, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also the Home Minister, said that was why the Kuala Lumpur Declaration in Combatting Transnational Crime proposed by Malaysia should be adopted and signed by the 10 ASEAN members.

"The Declaration among others highlighted issues that have to be seriously considered by the Ministers, such as the emergence of the new forms of transnational crime, including the call for the formulation of a new ASEAN Plan of Actions to Combat Transnational Crime since the last action plan was drawn in 2002.

"As all ASEAN members are signatory to the United Nations' Convention on Transnational Crime (UNTOC), thus it calls for readiness on our part to embrace changes that will take place in the near future in terms of the emergence of new forms of transnational crime," the deputy prime minister said.

Ahmad Zahid said this when opening the 10th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime And The Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting On The Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism, here today.

According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the new forms of transnational crime, among others also included the illicit trades of nature and cultural heritage, illegal wildlife trade, illicit trade in wood-based products, illicit trade in electrical and electronic waste or e-waste, illicit trade in ozone-depleting substances and counterfeit consumer goods.

Meanwhile, the traditional areas in transnational crime were trafficking in persons, cybercrime, sea-piracy, economic-related crimes, money laundering, and smuggling of arms and drugs.

Elaborating further, the deputy prime minister said transnational crime would cause grave implications on the stability, security, sovereignty and public order of individual nations.

"Transnational crime is a phenomenon which essentially involves movement of people across borders, and trans-border financial transactions including involvement of transnational organised crime syndicates.

"It affects the very fabric of our societies at all levels, so much so that it has been argued that the struggle against organised and transnational crime will be the defining security concern of the twenty-first century," Ahmad Zahid said.

Ahmad Zahid pointed out that ASEAN has long recognised such threats and has taken immediate measures as well as concerted efforts to combat the problem since the early 70s.

The effort is seen to be much more crucial now as the 10 countries are set to realise the ASEAN Community by the end of the year.

"The establishment of the ASEAN Community at the end of this year warrants us to be more resilient, adequately prepared, adopting holistic and comprehensive measures as well as utilising technological advancement to effectively address the existing threats posed by transnational crime.

"We must strongly bear this in mind since the AMMTC is an important component of the ASEAN Political Security Committee (APSC) that supports the realisation of the ASEAN Community besides the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community," he reminded the delegates.

On his final note, Ahmad Zahid said the law enforcement and stringent legislations were insufficient to deal with the problem and this was where strategic partnerships and outreach programs with civil societies and private sectors were needed.

The four-day biennial AMMTC which entered the second day today will see the endorsement by the ASEAN leaders on the Kuala Lumpur Declaration in Combatting Transnational Crime and The Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Irregular Movement of Persons in South-East Asia.

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