

**ASEAN Needs To Be Clear, Firm In Addressing Drug Problems, Says DPM  
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LANGKAWI, Oct 29 (Bernama) -- ASEAN must have a clear direction, collective actions and a firm position in addressing drug problems, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said here Thursday.

He said liberation of trade in the region would not only bring prosperity, but could also emerge as an opportunity for international drug and transnational criminal syndicates to widen their operations.

"We need to be aware of the impact of regional economic integration to the drug situation in the region, the dark side of the international trade," he said in his opening speech at the 4th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters here.

He said the capacity of the workforce in drug abuse prevention and treatment was one of the areas that needed to be strengthened to improve efforts and outcomes in drug demand reduction.

"Prevention efforts must be prioritised and focus...allocation for prevention and treatment workforce development is crucial," he added.

Ahmad Zahid said adopting the evidence-based drug policy and measures as well as scientifically proven prevention and treatment interventions was a challenge for ASEAN.

He said many research findings were not translated into policy and practice, forcing past practices to continue to be repeated, despite their disappointing outcomes.

"To get different results, we must dare to change. We must continue to share our knowledge, experiences, best practices and research outcomes," he added.

He said cooperation and cross-border collaboration among ASEAN member states had to be strengthened through a clearly defined regional mechanism.

"Apart from that, we could engage our neighbours, like Japan, China and Australia, in the planning and implementation of our strategies through collaborative efforts, since drugs know no boundaries," he added.

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