

Fight Against Terrorism: Malaysia, US Agree To Make Malaysia A Counter-Messaging Centre
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20 (Bernama) -- Malaysia and the United States have agreed to make Malaysia a counter-messaging centre to fight violent extremism.

Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak when disclosing this after bilateral talks with US President Barack Obama in Malaysia's capital Friday said that they held similar positions in terms of combating violent extremism and both agreed to work closely to make the Southeast Asian region safer.

Najib pointed out that Southeast Asia was not immune from the threat of violent extremism as there were groups operating in the region and aligned to the IS militant group.

"So we will work closely with the US and like-minded countries to make this region safer and to combat any form of violent extremism," he said at a joint press conference with Obama after the 45-minute bilateral meeting.

Najib said the counter-messaging centre initiative was important because in fighting violent extremism "not only a military solution is required but winning the hearts and mind of the people".

"That is why is important for us to present the counter narrative, to present the authentic, the true Islam. So people will realise what IS try to represent is a perversion of Islam," he said.

Najib said Malaysia was committed to continue efforts to present 'what is true Islam'.

Obama at the press conference hailed Malaysia for voicing out against terrorism. He said Malaysia, a Muslim majority nation like Indonesia, represented tolerance and peace.

Obama said it was most welcome that Malaysia was willing to host the messaging centre using all available tools, social media, engaging scholars and clerics to counter violent extremism.

"We look forward to work with Malaysia on it (the centre)," he said.

In their meeting, Najib and Obama also touched on disputes over the South China Sea.

Najib said he had explained to Obama that Malaysia's position was consistent with the rule of law on the issue.

In expressing hopes that the tensions would not escalate, Najib said he also hoped that the disputing parties would be able to find a negotiated settlement consonant with the principles of international law.

Obama, meanwhile, said while the US was not one of the claimants in the disputes, it believed the rule of law must apply in dealing with the matter.

ASEAN countries involved in overlapping claims in the South China Sea are the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei and Malaysia while other claimants are China and Taiwan.

In 2002, China and the ASEAN countries signed a declaration on the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea, which called for settlement of territorial and jurisdictional disputes by peaceful means through friendly consultations and negotiations by the sovereign states directly involved.

Najib said the two leaders also engaged in discussions of a general nature whereby he had explained on the current situation in Malaysia while Obama raised some matters during the meeting.

"We take into account some of his views and concerns," he said, adding that Malaysia was committed to reform and ensuring peace and stability.

Najib and Obama also discussed on climate change and both leaders agreed "we need a deal at the Paris climate talks".

"Hope a deal can be reached in Paris," said Najib.

The Paris Climate talks will be held from Nov 30 to Dec 11.

This is Obama's second visit to Malaysia in two years. He had made a state visit to Malaysia in April last year.

"To the people of Malaysia, it is good to be back," said Obama.

Obama is scheduled to attend the 3rd ASEAN-US Summit as well as the 10th East Asia Summit over the weekend.

"Looking forward to participate in the related summits," Obama said, adding that the East Asia Summit had become one of the premier mechanisms for countries to coordinate a whole range of issues.

Malaysia is the chairman of ASEAN for 2015. The grouping consists of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

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