

We Must Deny Terrorists from Getting Fund, Says Ahmad Zahid

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From Hafizah Kamaruddin

WASHINGTON, April 3 (Bernama) -- In curbing terrorism, there is a need to deny terrorists from getting funds and financial assistance from any parties, Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said.

The Deputy Prime Minister said they should also be prevented from handling explosives, bomb making and fire arms.

"Last but not least, we must stop them from having access to Improvised Explosive Device (IED), and any nuclear related component," he said.

Zahid, in his remarks on terrorism, extremism and deradicalisation at the "Conversation with Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister" session with the American University's School of International Service students on Saturday here, said Malaysia had taken these three major steps in the battle against terrorism in the country.

The programme was moderated by Prof Amitav Acharya, professor of international relations of the university, who serves the Chair of the ASEAN Studies centre at the university.

Another pertinent issue that needed to be addressed immediately is the usage of social media in disseminating Daesh ideology to a cross section of society, said Ahmad Zahid who is also Home Minister.

"Thus, in handling this issue the Malaysian government together with our international partners, including the United States has taken proactive measures by setting up a Digital Counter Messaging Centre with the aim to conduct counter narrative approach in order to prevent Daesh from disseminating its ideology, false information and recruiting new members.

"We have to break the group's momentum, and ultimately its back. Our goal is not to deter or contain Daesh but to defeat and destroy Daesh," he said.

In ensuring victories over terrorist leaders and networks, he said, there was a need to pursue a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.

"One that embeds our common mission against Daesh within a broader struggle against radical jihadist that is bigger than any one group, whether it is al Qaeda or ISIS or another similar network," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said the world was facing both an immediate war against a shared enemy and a generational struggle against an ideology with deep roots that would not be easily torn out.

"The passion arises from a deep-rooted adherence and myopic loyalty to a mission that many of these militants do not fully comprehend, but yet they are blindly devoted to.

"I believe it is the passion - the overwhelming emotional reservoir in radicals and extremists - which we need to, identify and address," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said nations should not just invest and allocate huge portions of their budgets for counter-terrorism operations.

He said they must also invest in non-lethal rehabilitation and reradicalisation programmes.

"Addressing terrorism and extremism will be one of the defining issues of our time. It will only be achieved if we are willing to constructively engage with one another, and to pursue peace in place of conflict," he said.

He said countering terrorism and extremism was a collective effort and Malaysia believed that international cooperation and solidarity were crucial in ensuring its success.

Ahmad Zahid, who was given a standing ovation from the university's students, also answered questions from the floor which mainly touched on Malaysia's moves in curbing terrorism.

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