

## **ASEAN Rejects Suggestion to Legalise Certain Drugs**

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**By Massita Ahmad**

SINGAPORE, Oct 20 (Bernama) -- ASEAN has rejected suggestions by several western countries which wanted to 'legalise' the use of several types of drugs for specific purposes, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

"We cannot accept these recommendations. The ASEAN-member countries unanimously agreed that the ASEAN way suits the grouping. The grouping agreed on the stand to reject the recommendations," Ahmad Zahid told reporters after attending the Fifth ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Drugs (AMMD), here today.

"We have zero tolerance on the drug issue," said Zahid, who is also the Home Minister.

Malaysia has been entrusted by the 4th AMMD to deliver the unified Asean Statement at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the world Drug Problem in 2016 (UNGASS 2016) in New York last April.

"The position statement clearly underscores our firm stand against illicit drugs, consistent with the existing three international drug control conventions and other relevant international instruments, while counteracting the effort by some countries to be 'more liberal' on drugs," Ahmad Zahid said.

He noted that the next question is "what is our plan of action in preparation for the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2019 when the current 10-year Political Declaration and Plan of Action of 2009 expires."

"Will our position and stand be able to sustain and make its way post-2019?"

Hence, at the meeting, Ahmad Zahid strongly urged that ASEAN through the meeting must decide the next plan of action to coordinate the work and strategize the effort.

"This is to ensure that our position against illicit drugs is secured during the next UNGA in 2019 when a new plan of action on the world drug problem is decided," he said.

Singapore is hosting the Meeting for two days which ends today.

Chaired by Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law, K Shanmugam, the Meeting brings ASEAN leaders together to discuss and shape the region's united response to the regional drug problem.

Shanmugam, who was also at the press conference, had praised Malaysia which had taken a very strong position in fighting against drug.

"We at Asean stand together. Early this year at UNGASS, Malaysia took a strong position on behalf of

all of ASEAN which was very good for us because it set the tone as to how we approach the meeting," he said.

Shanmugam noted that Malaysia and Singapore worked closely on fighting against drugs and the rest of ASEAN countries were also in agreement.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime estimated that there are over three million heroin users and five million methamphetamine users in East and Southeast Asia.

At the same time, the region is also one of the largest and fastest-growing methamphetamine markets in the world.

Between 2009 and 2014, the quantity of methamphetamine seized in East and Southeast Asia almost quadrupled to close to 50 tonnes.

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