

Malaysia's Counter-messaging Centre Countering Extremism, Radical Activities – Zahid Bernama

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From Ahmad Fuad Yahya

LONDON, Nov 8 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has moved forward to counter the narratives of terrorists and extremists especially on cyberspace by establishing a Counter-Messaging Centre, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said today.

He said the move was part of the strategic approach to counter such extremism because the authorities were fully aware that terrorists were good at creating stories and rhetoric to influence social media users.

"These stories have been flooding cyberspace and influencing social media users to believe that the stories are real, and the terrorists are fighting in the name of religion," he said in his opening remarks at the Chatham House Roundtable Discussion here.

In his talk titled "Militarism and Counter-terrorism: A Malaysian Perspective", Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said the narrative of Islam must be retold to convey the clear message that the extremists are blasphemers because their distorted religious ideology and actions lead to the loss of innocent lives.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Centre synchronized efforts to counter radical social media messages and present the true image of Islam, within ASEAN and beyond.

He said that the centre, which is manned by the Malaysian police since September 2016, utilises studies that illustrate that the Daesh struggle was not in accordance with the principles of Islam

Ahmad Zahid said radicalism continues to be an utmost concern to security agencies all over the world and it would remain as one of the potent threats especially through the extensive use of the internet as a tool in spreading violent extremism and radical propaganda.

Criminals and terrorists were now using new communication platforms especially through social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, e-mail and even through smartphones by WhatsApp and Telegram as an avenue to indoctrinate and spread their twisted message of hatred, he said.

"Malaysia believes that an important strategy to counter violent Islamic extremism is to remove distortions and lies about the religion," he said, adding that Malaysia had a long history of emphasising moderation through the practice of "wassatiyah", a Quranic injunction.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the deradicalisation strategy of Malaysia requires strategic collaboration between the Government, civil society, the private sector, local communities and society at large to prevent individuals or groups of individuals from engaging in extremist and radical activities at home and abroad.

Malaysia, he said, was also working closely in cooperation with other international partners in the pursuit and implementation of its deradicalisation strategy.

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