

## **Obama Praises Malaysia for Setting up Regional Centre to Curb Daesh Influence**

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**From Mohd Shukri Ishak**

VIENTIANE, Sept 8 (Bernama) -- United States President Barack Obama has praised Malaysia's efforts in setting up the Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Communication Centre to curb Daesh influence and propaganda, according to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said Obama's appreciation and praise were conveyed at the ASEAN-US Summit here today.

"His words of appreciation and praise were included in his review and he also thanked Malaysia...for our contribution to curb IS (Daesh) propaganda," he told the Malaysian press on the last day of the 28th and 29th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits here today.

The setting up of the Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Communications Centre was proposed by Najib at the Leaders' Summit on Countering Daesh and Violent Extremism chaired by Obama in September last year.

The initiative is an effort to stem the growing outreach and recruitment efforts of the Daesh militant group using social media.

On the absence of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte at the ASEAN-US Summit, Najib said he did not ask about it, but he believed that Duterte might have skipped the summit as it would be awkward and uncomfortable for him to face Obama after the controversial incident involving the two leaders.

However, Najib said Duterte attended the 11th East Asian Summit (EAS) held later.

During the EAS, Najib said Duterte also showed him pictures of the increasingly serious drug-related problems in the Philippines, as well as pictures from the colonial era, in which thousands of Filipinos were killed by the US and Spanish armies.

Through the pictures, Najib said Duterte questioned the human rights bandied about by the US while many of the people in Philippine were killed by the US army.

The prime minister said Duterte also stressed that the values of human rights should not apply to drug dealers who killed, intimidated and raped the citizens of the Philippines.

"He witnessed it all (the brutality of drug dealers) and now Philippine is burdened with serious drug problems," Najib said.

When asked whether Duterte had stolen the limelight at the ASEAN Summit, the prime minister said it would depend on how people viewed the matter.

"When you say something harsh (to the US President), of course all eyes will be on you, but for me,

what matters is for ASEAN to stay united and make a stand based on facts so that ASEAN will remain as a respected organisation," he said.

This is the first ASEAN Summit held after the establishment of the ASEAN Community on Dec 31, 2015 and after the adoption of ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together (ASEAN Vision 2025), which was both concluded during Malaysia's chairmanship.

For the first time, Laos decided to hold the 28th and 29th ASEAN Summits back to back this year.

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