

Preventive laws powerful weapon to counter violent extremism – PM

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From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin

SYDNEY, March 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's preventive laws are a powerful and effective weapon in combating violent extremism and preventing possible incidents of violence, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said there was a need to have certain legislative powers such as laws that were formulated and implemented in Malaysia like the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA), Prevention of Crime Act (POCA), National Security Council (NSC) Act and so on.

"There is no meaning if we act after something has happened. This is the model we use in Malaysia and it is very effective," he told Malaysian journalists here Saturday.

He said even though there were police and security forces personnel working diligently in detecting and apprehending those who might commit acts of violence or resort to violent extremism, preventive laws were also needed.

"This is what we have proved...when there is a legal force that can be imposed on any individual who is likely to commit a crime involving violence, then that action is very effective. So far, thank God, no one has died in the incidents of violence in Malaysia. We as the government are committed to ensuring that this situation will continue," he said.

The Prime Minister was the only representative of ASEAN to be invited to speak at the closing of the Conference on Terrorism Prevention here Saturday, which is part of the summit to share Malaysia's experience in combating terrorism.

Najib said he highlighted the model adopted by Malaysia which had so far shown to be successful in ensuring the security of the country.

"We have made Malaysia safe for Malaysians and foreigners, and I say it is because we have the powers of certain laws," he said.

He said he also touched on the new battleground. the social media, in his speech to enable the country to highlight more persuasive and effective contents to influence youths.

"This is why we have to reject Daesh ideology and extreme understanding and that they (youths) should appreciate the authentic Islam. Our efforts in this aspect is the new battleground which we need to give more attention," he said.

At the closing ceremony of the conference, the leaders witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between ASEAN and the Australian government on International Cooperation on Combatting Terrorism.

Earlier, Najib and the other ASEAN leaders were officially welcomed by Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to the summit. They then attended the New Colombo Plan high tea event, where the heads of state and ASEAN governments held meetings with Australian students pursuing studies under the plan.

In the morning, before the start of the summit, Najib had a bilateral meeting with Turnbull.

Commenting on the meeting, Najib said it covered various areas such as the economy, defence, security, tourism and education.

He said there was an increase in trade ties between the two countries and hoped that it could translate into more Australian investments in Malaysia, as currently, Malaysia's investment value in Australia was more than the former's in Malaysia.

"We also talked about regional and international issues such as the situation on the Korean Peninsula, about the Rohingyas, south of the South China Sea, and southern Philippines. Also emphasised was the fight against violent extremism and terrorism. The Australian PM hopes that this can be enhanced, especially in terms of intelligence sharing.

"In the matter of the Rohingyas, he is equally concerned .. he does not see it as a Muslim issue or purely humanitarian issue. Both of us agreed that there is the possibility of Daesh recruiting supporters among the people who are displaced, and people who have been persecuted. The concern now is the security elements that would be a threat in the future," he said.

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