

## **Malaysia, New Zealand to strengthen ties in combating terrorism - Wan Azizah**

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 (Bernama) -- Against the backdrop of the recent deadly terrorist attack in Christchurch, Malaysia and New Zealand are on the same page on the need to forge closer ties to fight terrorism.

This follows talks between Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and his counterpart Winston Peters in the Malaysian capital today.

“We have agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in combating this scourge of terrorism,” Dr Wan Azizah told the media after their meeting held at the Parliament building here.

“The attack on the two mosques during Friday prayers on March 15 claimed the lives of 50 people, including a Malaysian teenager. Dozens of others were injured.

“During the meeting, Dr Wan Azizah said she also offered heartfelt condolences on the part of the Malaysian government to the government of New Zealand and its people and the families of the victims.

“The government of Malaysia stands together with the government of New Zealand in this difficult time,” she said at the joint press conference with Peters who is also New Zealand's foreign minister.

Dr Wan Azizah also extended the government's appreciation to the government of New Zealand for all assistance rendered to the Malaysian victims of the attack that drew widespread condemnation from New Zealand society and others across the globe. Three

Malaysians were among the injured.

Peters, who is in town on a two-day working visit, said: “The victims of this appalling terrorist attack include Malaysians, and our thoughts are very much with them, their families and communities.”

He said the New Zealand government was providing every support to those who had been impacted by the incident.

“We are a country that practices religious tolerance. An attack on one of us observing our beliefs is an attack on all of us,” he said.

Peters said New Zealand was grateful for the expressions of sympathy and support extended by the Malaysian King (Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah), Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, other Malaysian leaders, civil society organisations and Muslims here in general.

“The most important thing we have noticed and have observed not just from countries around the world but, in particular from the 57 Islamic nations, is their level of understanding and support.

“And we've been particularly humbled to have Malaysia stand with us in a very bleak hour,” he said.

He said the country was also touched by the visits by 50 Muslim and civil society organisations to the New Zealand High Commission here to pass on messages of solidarity since the attack.

Peters, the first New Zealand leader to visit Malaysia after the horrific attack, also expressed condolences and sympathies of all New Zealanders over the attack to all those affected.

“Our message to the people of Malaysia and around the world is that...let us work with a renewed vigour to spread tolerance, compassion and understanding,” he said.

Peters also met with Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah and Parliamentary Caucus on Reform and Governance chairman Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He is scheduled to leave Malaysia this evening.

Meanwhile, Dr Wan Azizah believed that bilateral relations between both countries in other fields would remain strong with more opportunities to strengthen and widen the cooperation.

“Both the Right Honourable Winston Peters and I have agreed to strengthen existing bilateral cooperation between Malaysia and New Zealand,” she said.

She cited trade, investment, education, tourism and people-to-people ties as examples where such cooperation could be deepened.

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