

**By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR**  
**Venue : PUTRAJAYA**  
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**Title : KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOUTH EAST ASIA REGIONAL CENTRE FOR COUNTER-TERRORISM (SEARCCT)**

Yang Berhormat Datuk Dr. Leo Michael Toyad  
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs,

YBhg. Tan Sri Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak  
Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

YABhg. Tun Haniff Omar

YBhg. Tan Sri/Datuk/Dato',

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh  
And a very good afternoon,

I am indeed happy to welcome all of you this afternoon in conjunction with the Official Launching Ceremony of the establishment of the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT).

2. The launching of the Center is a big step forward for Malaysia and South East Asia in the war against terrorism. The location of the Centre in Kuala Lumpur is also a tribute to the ongoing efforts to confront this menace and to our unwavering commitment to counter-terrorism. Malaysia is well placed to host this initiative. We believe we have the necessary experience in dealing with terrorism. We fought a 12 year Emergency against terrorists and finally succeeded in bringing them into the mainstream of Malaysia's society. We were fortunate to have a well trained security force and a highly effective intelligence apparatus. There is no coup d'etat, revolution or the overthrow of government by force. Malaysians are a peaceful law abiding civil society. The few incidents involving religious extremist are being dealt with by enforcing stringent protective legislation.

3. The Centre will be under the purview of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia. Its main scope of responsibility will be to examine the causes and origins of terrorism and conduct an in-depth study of terrorist organizations in different parts of the world. Border security will be given special priority. The cornerstone of the Center's emphasis though will be on creating public awareness through conferences, seminars, sustained education programs, training on terrorism and counter-terrorism measures as well as the management of post-terrorism consequences including those involving chemical, nuclear and biological warfare.

4. It must be emphasized that the Centre is not involved in operations nor serve as an intelligence agency. But it will work closely with security agencies both within the country and abroad to gather and exchange information. This is to ensure that those involved in various fields related to counter-terrorism are truly prepared for the task.

5. Terrorism itself is not a new phenomenon. This common foe of the global community has been with us for almost half a century as terrorists have sought to bring about political change and often through violent means. The perpetrators of terrorist acts, as we know it, do so for various reasons. But the net impact of their actions on humanity itself is incalculable. As the attacks on the Pentagon, the World Trade Centre in New York, the Bali bombing and subsequent events have shown, terrorism has so traumatized the world that the fear and shock continue to haunt us to this day. The world, indeed has changed and governments must recognize this. The deadly bomb blast in Bali brought terrorism uncomfortably close to our home and seemingly opened up a second front at our very doorstep.

6. There is a psychological fall out from terrorism that must be dealt with. The term "terrorism" itself means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents. The motive is to influence an audience to spread hatred, fear and dissension. It embraces elements of politics, warfare and propaganda next to the criminal element. This has led to the complex question of what terrorism really is. The urgency today is for the international community to try and make a clear definition. The United Nations on its part has been struggling to achieve consensus on the definition issue. There are now a number of UN conventions and protocols on terrorism and terrorist activities. We should not prolong this argument but instead strive to achieve a consensus so that those who are fighting a just cause can seek our backing, and others, who kill to achieve their own ends, our condemnation.

7. Modern terrorism is a by-product of globalization, one of its downsides. Conventional terrorist attacks have always been part of the human condition. There is nothing new about hijacking, – nothing new about kidnapping, assassination or even suicide bombings. Terrorist movements are hardly unknown – the IRA and the Tamil Tigers are cases in point. But it is the scale and magnitude that have reached truly globally proportions. Al Qaeda is a global force – globally organized and orchestrated – and globally targeted.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. We in South East Asia recognize the need for strong bilateral cooperation, solidarity, commitment and trust in the war against terrorism. The pooling of resources has been a key outcome of this and we have learnt well from the acts of terrorism perpetrated in the past. We are now better placed to nip any terrorist activity in the bud.

9. In acknowledging the threat of terrorism in South East Asia, we reiterate that by no means is the region the epicenter of frontline of all terrorist activity in the world,

as some might make it out to be. The reality is, the terrorist threat in South East Asia is really no different from what other regions or countries throughout the world today may face. By far, South East Asia is still a region of peace and stability.

10. South East Asia too is a region of socio-economic success. We are a picture of growth and prosperity. Terrorism may be a threat. But we are determined to fight it at all cost.

11. Vigilance is now the order of the day and any threat of terrorism is being dealt with swiftly and effectively. This is evident from the continuing detection and arrests' of Jemaah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda members in South East Asia. There is a careful and continuous review of each others' security. This is not just in the context of terrorism but its possible links to transnational organized crime such as money laundering, trafficking in human beings and arms as well as the production of and trafficking in illicit drugs which forms part of a complex set of new security challenges.

12. South East Asia has emerged as an area of great strategic importance in the global offensive against terrorism. In this context, the Government of Malaysia and all others in the region acknowledged the threat of terrorism. As a region, we have been dealing with terrorism even before September 11. But we recognize that in today's context, this threat due to its complexity is the most serious to international peace and security. Terrorism therefore remains high on the agenda of meetings of ASEAN.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. Malaysia has always strongly condemned all acts of terrorism and deems it a crime against humanity. Malaysia can in fact be of help in assisting others in dealing with modern terrorism. We are willing to work closely with the international community to strengthen cooperation in preventing and combating terrorism.

14. The establishment of the Centre and its opening to the international community is an acknowledgement that the fights against terrorism transcend borders and require an integrated and coordinated effort at the national, regional and international levels. We are glad that many countries are supporting the establishment of the Centre. I hope we will continue to receive supports not only from South East Asian countries but the international community at large as well as the United Nations. We are confident that the Centre will give Malaysia and South East Asia a visible edge in countering terrorism. I believe with our joint efforts in eradicating the scourge on terrorism, the world will be a better and safer place for all of us to live in. No one country can fight this evil act alone. We have to collaborate closely together to attain this objective.

Thank you