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It is indeed an honour for me to pen a few words leading up to the highly-anticipated second edition of the International Exhibition of National Security for Asia (NATSEC) 2020, which will be held alongside the 17th edition of Defence Services Asia in April 2020. This highly collaborative event is essential towards the promotion of global and national security – a crucial necessity in this day and age.

In recent times, prison and probation systems around the world – including in Malaysia – have been a platform for radicalisation leading to violent extremism. This is because the prison environment can be a fertile breeding ground for extremism due to risks such as the recruitment of prisoners, the support of extremist groups from prison and conversely, the support of prisoners from extremist groups outside prison walls.

While the Malaysian Prisons Department has been quite adept in dealing with such challenges, the development and modernisation of extremist organisations and their modus operandi has led to new dynamic and pressures, which need to be monitored and deliberated on at considerable length in order to glean new interventions and measures.

This is even particularly so when dealing with radicalisation that leads to violent extremism in prison and probation settings as they pose new and recurring challenges which are often multi-faceted and complex in nature. Given these complexities, the necessity of cooperation among industry professionals, both on a local and international level, is highly crucial.

In this regard, the Prisons Department has taken on several proactive measures in tackling these issues. For instance, in October 2019, the department held a colloquium and workshop at its headquarters titled “Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation in Prison – What’s Working?” As the title suggests, the event sought to identify and deliberate on issues affecting the prisons department including extremism and radicalisation.

While we do our part, there needs to be a holistic approach in handling such issues, which will involve intellectual discourse of local and international stakeholders alike, to effectively address the management of such affairs. Events such as NATSEC Asia are of great necessity as it plays a highly instrumental role in the exchange of knowledge and skills amongst professionals and stakeholders from around the globe.

On a separate note, I am also looking forward to the display of cutting-edge hardware, sophisticated electronics and systems for the security industry by more than 100 global companies, even as we look into the viability of incorporating the use of modern technology, including artificial intelligence (A.I) in our facilities.

This comes as part of a greater plan to introduce a smart prison system here in Malaysia which will see improvements in every aspect of prison management: from detention, rehabilitation, staff training, compliance with regulations to facilities, community correction, and inmate reintegration into society.

For these reasons, I wholeheartedly look forward to NATSEC Asia 2020 and DSA 2020, and especially to meeting my counterparts from other parts of the world at the event. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the organisers for putting together yet another stellar show which I am certain will go even further than ever before towards the promotion of a safer world for all of us.