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## ASEAN Countries Must Act In Unison To Mow Down Daesh-Affiliated Terror Groups

KUALA LUMPUR, April 19 (Bernama) – Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein has called on ASEAN countries to act in unison to mow down Daesh-affiliated terrorist groups in the southern part of the Philippines and Thailand.

The defence minister said the matter should not be taken lightly and ASEAN countries needed to be on their toes in dealing with these terror groups as they were mushrooming and creating hotspots and flashpoint in the region.

He said there was evidence of the unification of terrorist battalions in the southern Philippines with the Daesh under the leadership of Al Baghdadi.

"The mushrooming of affiliated terrorist organisations in the region was creating 'hotspots' and 'flashpoint', especially in southern Philippines and southern Thailand," he said.

Hishammuddin was speaking at the Putrajaya Forum 2016 themed, 'Regional Cooperation in Addressing Security Challenges' at the Sunway Putra Hotel here Tuesday.

He said the news was alarming for Malaysia, especially when one considered that its eastern state of Sabah had come under attack in the past from militant groups from the southern Philippines.

"In the quixotic dream of Nur Misuari to form a 'caliphate' in the Sulu Sea means that we will not be able to take our eyes off from this area any time soon," he said.

Meanwhile, Hishammuddin stressed that ASEAN should not lose sight of the fact that terrorism transcended race and religion.

"In fact, Daesh action continues to victimise the global Ummah in the sense that their misdeeds have created fear and suspicion amongst the faith communities in the world," he said.

On South China Sea disputes, Hishammuddin believes that such disputes should be resolved peacefully through diplomacy, especially via multi-lateral platforms such as ASEAN, and with respect for all parties concerned.

"Malaysia also looks forward to working with our neighbours such as the Philippines, Vietnam and Brunei to find ways to forge ahead in this issue," he said.

The forum was held in conjunction with the Defence Services Asia Exhibition and Conference (DSA) 2016.

DSA, Asia's biggest defence show, has gathered industry players from across 60 countries, as well as trade visitors from 77 countries.