



India, Indonesia must jointly propagate moderate values of Islam: NSA Doval

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National Security Advisor Indonesian Minister Mohammad Mahfud and Ulema of India and Indonesia attending the interfaith conference

New Delhi/Tripti Nath

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Tuesday said that India and Indonesia must join hands to develop common narratives on de-radicalisation and propagate moderate virtues of Islam. He made these remarks in his opening address at the India Islamic Culture Centre here on a dialogue

on the role of Ulema in fostering a culture of interfaith peace and social harmony in India and Indonesia.

A panel of eminent scholars and professionals are participating in the dialogue.

The NSA highlighted the potential role of the Ulema in educating the people on the original tolerant and moderate principles of Islam and countering radicalization and extremism with progressive ideas and thought. He voiced the hope that the dialogue would generate a rich discourse and throw up fresh ideas and suggestions to foster a culture of interfaith peace and social harmony in India and Indonesia.

Doval reminded the distinguished gathering that democracy has no place for hate speech, prejudice, propaganda, demonization, violence, conflict and misuse of religion for narrow ends. "The Ulemas play a very important role in Islamic society. The aim of today's discussion is to bring together Indian and Indonesian Ulema and scholars who can take forward our cooperation in promoting tolerance, harmony and peaceful co-existence. This will bolster the fight against violent extremism, terrorism and radicalisation."

He said that both India and Indonesia are home to the world's largest Islamic populations. Indonesia is the world's largest Islamic country and India is home to the third largest Muslim population in the world.

Doval said, "We meet at a time of tremendous churn in international relations and uncertainty about the future. It is at such times that countries like India and Indonesia, with their experience of multi-faith harmony and co-existence, can send a joint message to the world to eschew violence and conflict. This will be a powerful symbol of the determination of two large countries (together we have 1.7 billion of the World population) to preserve and promote the true values espoused by religion. Together, we should strive to propagate moderate virtues of Islam as a beacon of hope and cooperation for the entire world."

The NSA told the Indonesian delegation, "Indonesia is a shining example of propagating the concept of interfaith harmony and is home to many faiths and religions like India. This is also reflected in the Bahasa Indonesia word 'Kerukunan' meaning communal harmony and concord."

Addressing his special guest, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Mahfud, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of Indonesia, the NSA said, "It is in this context, Excellency, your idea to bring a high-level Ulema delegation "National Treasures" to India is apt and extremely important. As you all are aware, both our countries have been victims of terrorism and separatism. While we have overcome the challenges to a considerable extent, the phenomenon of cross-border terrorism continues to pose a threat. Cooperation of the civil society is essential in countering the threat from ISIS inspired individual terror cells and returnees from theatres like Syria and Afghanistan."

Doval observed that none of the ends for which extremism, radicalisation and the misuse of religion are employed are justifiable on any ground. “This is a distortion of religion against which all of us need to raise our voices. Extremism and terrorism is against the very meaning of Islam because Islam means peace and well-being (Salamati/Asalaam). Opposition to such forces should not be painted as a confrontation with any religion. That is a ruse. Our youth should receive special attention towards this end. They are often the primary target of radicalization, but if their energies are nurtured in the right direction, they can emerge as harbingers of change and building blocks of progress in any society.”

Doval said that it is crucial that India and Indonesia share and understand the historical and cultural context of Islam in our respective countries, which has peaceful and tolerant underpinnings. “It is significant that Islamic theological schools of Debandism, Barelvism and Sufism took roots in India. Later, their practices and traditions spread to other Islamic nations. Abd al Rauf al-Sinki, in the 17th Century, is credited to have brought Sufi Shattariya traditions to Indonesia from India.”

He emphasized that positive discourse should be disseminated properly. “State institutions also need to come together in detecting and identifying potential negative influencers and share information to counter their activities. In this, Ulemas, due to their deep connect with civil society, can play a vital role.”

The NSA reasoned that India and Indonesia should focus on the real message of our religions, which stands for the values of humanism, peace and understanding. “Indeed, as the Holy Quran itself teaches, killing one person is like killing all humanity and saving one is akin to saving humanity, Islam ordains that the most excellent form of Jihad is 'Jihad Afzal' - that is, Jihad against one's senses or ego - and not against innocent civilians.”

Doval also stressed the need to counter disinformation and propaganda that can impede peaceful co-existence among the followers of different faiths. Highlighting the merits of Islam, Doval said, “Islam emerged as a rallying point for the disadvantaged and was tolerant in its outlook. After the Prophet's demise fissures emerged among the Caliphs on the question of his legitimate heir. Each faction attempted to outdo the other by espousing a more radical interpretation of the Hadiths.”

The NSA reminded the gathering that while technology is a blessing for humanity. it is also being misused by anti-social elements to spread hatred and for disruptive purposes. The Ulema must also be adept in the use of technology and utilize various technological solutions to thwart the evil designs of propaganda and hate.

Extending a warm welcome to the Indonesian dignitaries, the NSA said, “I welcome all of you to India, a land which believes in the precepts of Vasundhaiva Kutumbakam - the world is one family. I also welcome all of you to Delhi - a city whose heritage reflects the full range of India's traditions of unity in diversity, religious tolerance and inter-faith harmony.”

He also expressed sadness over loss of lives and damage to property in the recent earthquake in Indonesia. “Our deepest condolences to the victims and their families. We wish a speedy recovery to the injured. India stands with Indonesia in this hour of grief.”

Doval said, “I fondly recall my visit to Indonesia in March 2022, and my interactions with Excellency Minister Mahfud. I was happy when Minister Mahfud accepted my invitation to visit India later this year. Excellency, it is an honour to host you and your delegation in India. We take pride in our relations with Indonesia, which has been elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in recent years.’

He also thanked Sirajuddin Qureshi, President of the India Islamic Cultural Centre for organising the dialogue.

Tracing the rich history of India’s ties with Indonesia, the NSA said, “Indonesia is an important partner in India's extended neighbourhood and our two countries share many complementarities. We have had vast and extended cultural, economic and spiritual contacts for 1600 years up to the 14th Century. These contacts showed us the value of openness, engagement and respect for diversity. We are both flourishing democracies in the Indo Pacific region.”

He further said that tourism has been an important ambassador of cooperation between our two countries. “Before the pandemic, five lakh Indians visited Bali every year. While the Taj Mahal is a major tourist attraction in India, in Indonesia people visit Hindu temples like Prambanan. This is a shining example of our tolerant and syncretic cultures.”

The NSA said that like India, Islam in Indonesia was spread by traders from present-day Kerala and Gujarat and Sufis from Bengal and Kashmir. “This peaceful spread led to the development of a syncretic culture, where not only pre-Islamic religions flourished side by side, but age-old traditions and local customs greatly influenced religious practices. Today, in this hall, we may speak different languages, but we share a common desire for peace and harmony,” he said.

<https://www.awazthevoice.in/india-news/india-and-indonesia-must-collaborate-to-propagate-moderate-values-of-islam-nsa-17810.html>