

PM: M'sia to strictly enforce nuclear trafficking law
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Malaysia said Wednesday it would strictly enforce a new law to curb trafficking of nuclear weapon components after being linked to illegal supply of sensitive technology to Iran and Libya.

"Malaysia is committed towards ensuring that nuclear materials and technologies do not fall into the wrong hands," said Prime Minister Najib Razak, who was in Washington to attend a landmark nuclear security summit.

The Malaysian parliament about two weeks ago passed the Strategic Trade Bill, which provides for prison terms of at least five years and fines of millions of dollars for those illegally bringing in or exporting material that could be used to make weapons of mass destruction.

Najib said that establishing the legal framework was "only the first step."

"The Malaysian government therefore intends to see to it that this legislation is strictly enforced and that our law-enforcement agencies are provided with the necessary resources to do so," he told a forum on US-Malaysia relations organized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The new law follows the government's denial late last year of involvement in the illegal 2008 export of nuclear weapons to Iran although it confirmed the involvement of one of its nationals.

In addition, a Sri Lankan businessman living in Malaysia was jailed in 2004 for allegedly supplying nuclear weapon components to Libya and linked to a nuclear black market run by Pakistan's disgraced scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan.

Khan had admitted passing nuclear secrets to Libya, Iran and North Korea in a confession in February 2004, placing him in the thick of a global atomic black market.

Najib said that the possibility that terrorists could gain control of nuclear weapons posed "a fundamental threat" to all, irrespective of which nation is targeted.

He said that the two-day nuclear summit called by President Barack Obama and which ended Tuesday "has emphasised the need to confront that threat with all the means at our disposal."

Najib also said the United States and Malaysia could explore ways to further expand collaboration in securing Southeast Asia's maritime environment.

The United States Navy has been sharing expertise with the maritime forces of Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand through annual exercises.

Singapore warned last month that a terrorist group was planning attacks on the Malacca Strait, triggering increased patrols by the island state as well as Malaysia and Indonesia, all of which border the narrow waterway.

Pirates and robbers have also used small fishing vessels to board ships during previous

attacks in the Malacca Strait, along which more than 30 percent of global trade and half the world's oil shipments pass through.

Najib said the region's maritime forces had been beefed up to fight piracy.

In 2000, there were 242 incidents in regional waters. Last year, that number had dropped to 45, he said.

- AFP

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