

# PM rebuts US report

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## Bill shows Malaysia seeking to check human trafficking

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia has shown its seriousness in tackling human trafficking, as seen in the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Bill that was passed in Parliament last month, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He added that the severity of the penalties and punishment for human traffickers in the bill reflected the Government's will to see such crimes stopped.

"I've read the report. We did whatever we could, but it was not enough.

"That's why we decided that the bill was necessary," he said yesterday in response to a US State Department report that claimed Malaysia was among several countries with

the worst human trafficking problems.

The bill, which has to be gazetted, states that human trafficking will be an offence that carries a maximum jail term of 20 years and a fine of up to RM500,000.

It also provides protection to victims, while severely punishing those who trafficked, harboured or profited from the offence.

To a question on whether Malaysia deserved to be placed in "Tier 3" ranking as stated in the report, Abdullah said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar had made a statement on the subject, and he did not intend to comment on the matter.

Abdullah was talking to reporters

after delivering his keynote address at the launch of the Kuala Lumpur Organisation of the Islamic Conference Health Ministerial Conference 2007 here yesterday.

Syed Hamid was reported to have said that the report was one-sided and did not take into account what Malaysia has been doing to prevent human trafficking crimes.

The US report stated that Malaysia was among countries rated at "Tier 3" in human trafficking, making it open to US economic sanctions.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak was confident "there would be no US economic sanctions against Malaysia."

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said the Government had taken steps since 2005 to address human trafficking, and that the report was unfair and unreasonable.

The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) disagreed with the report, said its Commissioner Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam.

"Compared to other countries, we have been very vocal and stern in addressing the issue of human trafficking," he added.

See Views 25

No need to get worked up