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PM: Take the fight against IS online

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It will help to amplify anti-IS message, says Najib

THE fight against violent extremist group Islamic State (IS) with its "insidious lies" and false narrative must be taken online, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

With their highly effective approach to communications and messaging, these so-called online terrorists had been inspiring too many of the impressionable, the vulnerable and the excluded to sign up, he added.

Joining the global condemnation of IS or ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), Najib said Malaysia "completely and unequivocally" rejected any attempt to associate the wicked crimes they perpetrated with Islam.

"We condemn their blatant misrepresentation of the Deen when they say that th'ir sadistic brutality, torture and murder of innocent men, women and children - Muslims and non-Muslims - are justified in the name of a religion that is truly one of peace, justice, tolerance and compassion."

Speaking at the Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism, Najib said South-East Asia currently lacked an overarching programme to counter IS online.

"We must address this and efforts are under way. I am pleased to say that Malaysia is actively exploring the possibility of establishing a Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Communications Centre.



"With support, the centre's work could be an effective region-wide effort to amplify anti-IS messaging," he added.

Citing a false analogy, he said IS claimed it was their duty to destroy historical sites because the Prophet Muhammad had destroyed the idols that were introduced into the Kaabah in Mecca.

The Kaabah was built by the Prophet Ibrahim for the worship of the One True God and later generations added the idols.

Prophet Muhammad was commanded to purify the Ka'ba of these idols for its use by his followers and to bring it back to its original form.

The historical sites being destroyed by the ISIS were never used for the worship of the One God and then later desecrated, so the argument for destroying them could not apply, said Najib.

In Malaysia and Asean, proactive steps have been taken.

As chair of Asean this year, Malaysia is currently hosting two key ministerial-level meetings - on transnational crime and the rise



of radicalisation and violent extremism - in Kuala Lumpur over the next few days.

"At the national level, we have strengthened the legal framework by updating and enacting new legislation. We must make pre-emptive arrests - if necessary and if there is irrefutable evidence - to save inno-

cent lives," said Najib.

He added that Malaysia's counter-terrorism forces had thwarted the attempts of extremists who wished to travel to the Middle East via Malaysia and stopped many from ruining their lives and the lives of others. They had also arrested over 100 people suspected of

links with IS.

These successes, he said, would not have been possible without close collaboration at the international level.

The Leaders' Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, hosted by United States President Barack Obama on the margins of the General Assembly's annual high-level debate, brought together representatives ' from over 100 nations, more than 20 multilateral institutions, some 120 civil society groups from around the world and partners from the private sector.

Among those who spoke at the summit were leaders from Iraq, Nigeria, Norway, Jordan, Britain, the Netherlands and Interpol.

Opening the meeting, Obama said it was not enough to defeat ISIL in the battlefield.

"We have to prevent it from radicalising, recruiting and inspiring others to violence in the first place. And this means defeating their ideology.

"Ideologies are not defeated with guns; they're defeated by better ideas - a more attractive and compelling vision."

He said the United States was stepping up its efforts, among other measures, to discredit ISIL's propaganda, especially online, and promoting the voices of Muslim scholars "who courageously stand up to ISIL and its warped interpretations of Islam".