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Malaysia a model Muslim nation

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British newspaper praises Najib's policies that have thwarted domestic terrorism

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia has been hailed as a model of how a Muslim majority country can provide its people a positive alternative to the danger of violent extremist ideology.

Britain's *The Telegraph* newspaper said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's administration and previous governments in Malaysia managed to harness the benefits of economic growth to build harmony and reduce the potential threat of domestic terrorism.

The article said "radical" economic development programmes such as the Northern Corridor Economic Region offered vulnerable rural Muslims a viable alternative to fol-

lowing the path to radicalisation.

"Ultimately defeating the poisonous ideology that spawns Islamist terror will come about because Muslims can see that they can have a peaceful, prosperous and respected place both in their own country and also in the global community.

"Successful economic and social reform will be indispensable to winning what (UK Prime Minister) David Cameron has called 'the struggle of our generation'.

"In this regard, Mr Najib's Malaysia is a model for other countries across Asia and the Middle East as to how predominantly Muslim societies can provide a positive alternative to the perils of reac-

tionary Islamist ideologies," the newspaper said in the article on Tuesday which appears on its website.

Titled "Jakarta Attacks: How to Defeat Islamic terrorism in the Far East", the article pointed out that Malaysia and several other Asian governments were working to counter the rise of militancy with a range of policies, which may provide useful lessons for Western governments dealing with the same issue.

The article said economic development programmes implemented by the Prime Minister were starting to pay dividends, including in some rural communities where there was

a greater risk of youths falling prey to extremist ideology.

"In 1970 the country's extreme poverty rate stood at 50%; today it is 1%. Mr Najib is now focused on doubling the incomes of Malaysia's bottom 40% over the next five years and growing the middle class."

The article said the extent of the terrorist threat facing Malaysia was revealed when security officials discovered that Najib and other prominent politicians in the country had been placed on an Islamic State (IS) hit list.

"Malaysian security officials believe Mr Najib has been placed on the hit list because, unlike some of his political opponents who appear

sympathetic to (IS), of the courageous stand he took against Islamist-inspired extremism at last November's Asean Summit when he declared that IS was responsible for 'this new evil that blasphemes against the name of Islam'."

Societies where Islam is culturally integrated and which provide young people with a realistic prospect of personal success were much less at risk from the dangers of violent extremist ideology, the article said.

"Whilst counter-terrorism efforts remain vital, economic and social policies have a huge role to play in helping to close off the pathways to extremism."