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Najib: People's safety comes first

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PRIORITIES: Legislation such as Sosma and Pota enacted to deal with threats, says prime minister

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak *speaking with Deputy Foreign Minister* ***Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican*** *(left) at the inaugural* ***Kuala Lumpur International Youth Discourse (KLIYD) at Putra World Trade Centre*** *in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With them are (from left) Defence Minister* ***Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein****, KLIYD chairman* ***Khairul Azwan Harun****, Razak School of Government chief executive officer* ***Prof Dr Hamidin Abd Hamid*** *and New Straits Times Press group managing editor* ***Datuk Abdul Jalil Hamid****.* **Pic by Khairull Azry Bidin**

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has reiterated that he will not apologise for making the security and safety of all Malaysians his first priority.

In his keynote address at the inaugural Kuala Lumpur International Youth Discourse (KLIYD) here yesterday, he said the government fully recognised the threat posed by the Islamic State (IS), and had introduced measures to tackle terrorism.

"Let me be clear: I make no apology for making the security and safety of all Malaysians my first priority.

"We passed the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act or Sosma, the Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act, the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the National Security Council Act.

"This is so we have legislation that allows us to deal with threats promptly and early. In some countries in the past, it was not an offence to support Daesh, nor to travel abroad for terrorist-military training. They had to rush to bring in new laws," he said, referring to the Arabic acronym for IS.

Najib said the misguided attempts of those who want to "bomb, maim and behead" could never be placed above the rights of the peaceful majority who firmly reject violence and war.

Present were KLIYD chairman and Umno Youth deputy chief Khairul Azwan Harun, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican, Razak School of Government chief executive officer Prof Dr Hamidin Abd Hamid and New Straits Times Press group managing editor Datuk Abdul Jalil Hamid.

Najib said more than 100 individuals with previous links to terrorism had gone through the government's deradicalisation programme, adding that fewer than 10 had turned back to extremism.

"The vast majority are working towards building peaceful, constructive lives and have turned their backs on terror," said Najib, who earlier said 257 individuals had been apprehended since 2012 for their suspected involvement with IS.

This year, he said, 112 Malaysians were detained for questioning.

"The police have identified more than 70 Malaysians who have been foolish enough to go to the Middle East to fight for Daesh. There may be many more who have tragically thrown their lives away for the lies of a group that blasphemes the name of our religion."

In his 30-minute address to hundreds of local and international youth leaders, Najib said terror groups often preyed on youths who felt marginalised and disenfranchised, adding that this group comprised vulnerable targets for extremists.

"When young people feel marginalised, extreme ideologies can give them a sense of purpose, a sense of importance, a sense of identity and belonging. These are false promises.

"But the vulnerability is real, and irresponsible, immoral terrorist groups know how to exploit it, from Jemaah Islamiyah and al-Qaeda in the past, to Daesh today," said Najib.

Citing the Movida pub bombing here in June, which left eight people injured, Najib said Malaysia was not immune to attacks by IS supporters, many of whom, he said, were youths.

"They (local IS militants) are from a variety of backgrounds — it would be a grave mistake to assume that there is only one way that people fall prey to radicalisation — but the majority are under 40, users of smartphones and active on social media."

However, Najib said, the setting up of the Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Centre and the formulation of a special rehabilitation module had been successful in countering religious extremism and presenting the true image of Islam.

"We need to re-emphasise that this is the true Islam. We must say again and again, loudly and clearly — through our interactions, through social media, through television, and through our religious teachers — that Muslims are commanded to follow the example, the Sunnah, of the Prophet Muhammad.

"The Quran is unequivocal about this. It states that 'We did not send you except as a mercy to the worlds'. And since we are commanded to follow the Prophet's Sunnah, we, too, must not be anything but a mercy to the worlds. Otherwise, we are violating the Sunnah of the Prophet, which is what these (IS) criminals are doing."

Najib said only those who lacked knowledge about Islam, or who were brainwashed by extremist teachings, would believe Islam preached the "blind and rampaging militancy" witnessed by the world today.

"Many of the people who have committed terrorist acts on behalf of Daesh were known for their lack of devotion, but were then rapidly radicalised, allowing their anger and frustration to be channelled by a perverted message.

"Some who travelled to join Daesh actually bought copies of a book titled *Islam for Dummies*.

"That sounds like a joke. But it is a hollow, bitter one, that has destroyed the lives of too many."

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