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PM: Anti-human trafficking efforts paying off

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PETALING JAYA — Malaysia's improved ranking in the annual Trafficking In Persons report shows the government's efforts against human trafficking locally and internationally have borne fruit, said Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

In a Facebook posting, the prime minister thanked those whose efforts resulted in the country being upgraded from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2 in the annual US State Department report.

"Our collective efforts in combating human trafficking locally and regionally are bearing fruit as Malaysia is no longer on the Tier 2 Watch List," he said.

"Well done to those who have worked tirelessly to achieve this. We remain committed to stopping trafficking, protecting victims and prosecuting the traffickers."

Home Ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Alwi Ibrahim said the ranking reflected increased enforcement efforts which saw traffickers being convicted.

He said non-governmental organisations

played an increasing role against trafficking, and protecting victims.

Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Dr Salleh Said Keruak said Malaysians acted against human trafficking activities as they were caring and respectful of human life.

"More importantly, Malaysia remains committed and will engage continuously in prevention, prosecution of traffickers, and protection of victims of this inhumane crime," he said.

The State Department report released yesterday said Malaysia has moved upwards for its efforts at restricting human trafficking ever since it was moved out of the bottom section in 2015.

"The government of Malaysia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. However it is making significant efforts to do so," it said.

"The government demonstrated increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. Therefore Malaysia was upgraded to Tier 2."

There are four categories:

- Tier 1 is granted to countries meeting the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards.
- Tier 2 is for countries which do not meet

the minimum standards but are making significant efforts in doing so.

- Tier 2 Watch List is for the same criteria but with increasingly severe forms of human trafficking, increasing number of cases and failure to document efforts against trafficking.
- Any country remaining on the watch list for three consecutive years is downgraded to Tier 3, recognising it has not "met the minimum standards and is taking no effort to do so".

Malaysia had been on the Tier 2 Watch List since 2010 before being downgraded to Tier 3 in 2014 but was upgraded to watch list status the following year.

The move was criticised for being trade motivated as any country on Tier 3 was disqualified from participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement.

However, the government asserted that its efforts, including the gazetting and implementation of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants (Amendment) Act 2015, resulted in the upgrade.

Tier 3 countries include China, North Korea, Iran and Syria, all of which have dismissed the ranking system as being politically motivated.