

**Malaysia Upgraded In US Trafficking In Persons Report**  
**Bernama**  
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WASHINGTON DC, July 28 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has been upgraded by one level to Tier 2 Watch List status in the 2015 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report Monday.

The annual report, released by the US State Department, listed the positions of 188 countries including the United States according to their efforts to tackle human trafficking by giving a ranking of Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 2 Watch List or Tier 3 Watch List. In the report, the US State Department said that while the government of Malaysia does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, it is making significant efforts to do so.

Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, Sarah Sewall, in a media briefing in Washington, denied that the upgrading of Malaysia's position was linked to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement which required signatories to fully meet the minimum standards of human rights.

"Our concern is truly on the facts in the TIP report," she told reporters Monday.

The TIP Report card on Malaysia is based entirely on the evaluation of facts compiled for over a year on the country's performance in prosecuting smugglers, protecting victims and preventing further human trafficking, said Sewall.

"Malaysia's Tier 2 Watch List ranking indicates that there is still much room for improvement in the government's anti-human trafficking efforts.

"While we still have concerns about any country that is on the Tier 2 Watch List, including Malaysia, the government of Malaysia has made significant efforts to comply with the minimum standards," she said.

Sewall said the report did not take into account the mass graves of migrants found at the abandoned camps used by human traffickers along the Malaysian-Thai border last May because the discovery happened beyond the reporting period of the TIP report.

The 2015 TIP Report is for the period between April 1 last year and March 31 this year.

Last year, the US State Department listed Malaysia and its neighbour Thailand, on the Tier 3 Watch List, the lowest rank that could lead to sanctions against the countries concerned.

Sewall noted that migrants along the border of Malaysia and Thailand had been subjected to a variety of abuses at the camps and the United States had been working with the affected governments and international organisations in the region to combat the crimes that had led to deaths.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Ambassador to the United States Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin, when contacted, said measures taken by the government to address human trafficking issues were well-received by the US government and that was a good sign for Malaysia.

Roy Michael, executive director at the Malaysia-United States Chamber of Commerce based in Washington DC, the upgrading of Malaysia's rank to Tier 2 Watch List was good news.

"This is not about whether or not Malaysia is qualified to be removed from Tier 3. Malaysia has taken necessary measures to fight human trafficking and matters relating to human trafficking are bound by multi-national jurisdiction.

"It is not just Malaysia, but all countries on the human-trafficking route should play an aggressive role in curbing the problem," he told BERNAMA.

He also said that relations between the United States and Malaysia were always strong and, as the ASEAN chairman, Malaysia could urge member countries to adopt a strong code of ethics.

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