

Malaysia at serious risk of Isis attack, says analyst
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Malaysia is at serious risk of an attack by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Isis) militants, a political consultant warns.

In a report carried by CNBC, head of Alavan Business Advisory Alastair Newton said security warnings about the terrorist threat in Malaysia "should be taken seriously".

"It is far from clear where, outside its 'heartland', Isis will strike next. But strike it will. And one region which appears to be at serious risk is Southeast Asia," Newton was quoted as saying on Tuesday.

Newton was referring to warnings earlier this year by foreign governments that terrorists were planning attacks in and around Kuala Lumpur, following a series of explosions in Jakarta on January 14 which killed seven.

Australia in February advised its citizens to exercise normal safety precautions across Malaysia, urging them to avoid all travel to the coastal resorts of eastern Sabah, including islands, dive sites and associated tourist facilities because of the high threat of kidnapping.

New Zealand classified travel to the area as "high risk", while the United Kingdom warned citizens against travel to coastal islands in Sabah, near the Philippines, citing high threats to foreigners of kidnapping and criminality.

In Malaysia, meanwhile, authorities said the country would remain on high security alert after terrorism analysts said Isis was now spreading its operations beyond the Middle East and Europe to Asia.

Security measures were increased in public areas, such as malls and tourist spots, while precautionary measures were said to be taken at border areas to prevent possible terrorist infiltration.

Police have arrested 157 suspected militants, including 25 women since 2013. They were believed to be involved with various levels of militant activities.

The latest was at the end of January, when seven people were picked up in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Pahang, Johor and Kedah for suspected links with Isis. Police seized a cache of bullets for various types of firearms, including those for the M16 assault rifle.

The three-day operation was a follow-up to the earlier arrest of a man at an LRT station in Kuala Lumpur on January 15.

The seven were said to be planning attacks at several popular spots in the Klang Valley as well as other states. Among those detained was a cell leader, a Sabahan,

who works as an assistant manager of a hotel in Johor.

Another suspect arrested in Johor was a 33-year-old factory store supervisor.

One of the seven was also identified as the cell's fund manager, whose task was to collect and channel funds to those wanting to go to Syria and for carrying out attacks.

The man, aged 50, was arrested in Kedah and had worked as a cendol seller. He was assisted by another detainee, aged 26 from Terengganu, who was planning to join Isis in Syria.

The counter-terrorism unit had also found out that one of those arrested had been in communication with Bahrin Naim, the Indonesian founding member of Khatibah Nusantara Muhammad, and whom Indonesian police said orchestrated the Jakarta attacks on January 14.

Another one of those arrested had been in contact with Malaysian Isis recruiter, Muhammad Wannady Mohamed Jedi, also known as Abu Hamzah. – March 3, 2016.

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