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Najib-Islam

MALAYSIA'S MODERATION PROVIDES GOOD IMAGE FOR ISLAM

PANGKOR, Perak, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's moderate and modern image reflects the face of Islam and its goodness, something that is urgently required in view of the negative perception facing the religion now, said Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said the Talibans and other extreme forces had given Islam a bad image and it would take a lot of work to correct this false perception.

Najib, who is also an Umno vice-president, said Malaysia had projected Islam well in this country, initiating at the institutional and community levels various projects and programmes such as the Islamic banking and other Islamic financial institutions.

"These are achievements that are worth mentioning for it projects Islam as a dynamic, moderate and modern way of life and not the ones projected by some to reflect archaic and intolerant ways," he said.

Najib said this in his keynote address entitled "Malaysia: Building a Modern and Stable Multiracial Nation" delivered on the opening day of the Asian Global Leadership Forum otherwise known as the "Pangkor Retreat" here today.

The retreat brings together captains of industry, top government officials and economists to discuss ways to achieve the "Peace Dividend - Making the World a Safer Place And Benefiting From It," in the aftermath of the attacks by terrorists on the United States on Sept 11 last year in which more than 3,000 people were killed.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is expected to deliver the closing address tomorrow.

Najib said the subject of Islam had been intensively debated globally and the world's opinion was split between those who see Islam as the enemy and those who do not.

The Government, which had declared Malaysia an Islamic state, had projected and was practicing the true faith of Islam and believed that there was no contradiction at all between a Muslim and modernity, he said.

"They are consistent and Muslims are encouraged to strive for excellence, achieve economic prosperity and pursue knowledge and acquire new technologies," he added.

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Najib said Malaysia had often been hailed as a model for a multiracial country and had been able to achieve economic growth and relative

prosperity and stability despite the presence of different ethnic groups.

"However, I must equally mention that this has been achieved by no miracle, but instead behind its success lies sacrifice, pain, compromise and hard work," he said.

"When it comes to education, we continue to balance between national aspiration on one hand and preserving the rights of various ethnic groups to enjoy their cultural heritage on the other hand," he added.

He said Malaysia also faced extremism and radicalism, even to the point of certain groups wanting to overthrow the legitimate government and replacing it with presumably a theocratic, possibly a Taliban type regime.

"The government has displayed intolerance towards such a menace and this is most welcomed by many segments of the population," he said.

He said the government would certainly show no tolerance, sympathy or compassion to any individual or groups that advocate racial bigotry and violence.

Najib said other religions are protected and their rights well preserved in line with with the Holy Quran where there are several verses that guarantee religious pluralism.

-- BERNAMA
AR AZZ AAM