

Religious differences not the cause of tension
Malaysiakini.com
February 14, 2011

Najib Abdul Razak said today that extremist understanding of religion rather than difference in beliefs is a cause of tensions in a country.

Extremism from the followers of whatever religion, if not handled, will affect adversely a nation and humanity as a whole, he said in his World Interfaith Harmony Week address at the Putrajaya International Conference Centre.

That was why, the prime minister said, he proposed the establishment of a global movement of moderates when addressing the United Nations General Assembly last year.

"For I believe this is the only way forward to save the world," he said at the gathering of religious leaders.

Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department Koh Tsu Choon and Jamil Khir Baharom were also present.

Malaysia is commemorating World Interfaith Harmony Week for the first time at the urging of Prince Ghazi of Jordan, who called for cordial relations between national and religious leaders in his speech at the UN last year. Najib said that Malaysia was a plural society which had proved that difference in race, religion, culture and language was not a big problem for people to live in peace and comfort.

"Malaysia has shown that difference in religion is not a big problem, but extremist understanding is, whether in Islam or any other religion," he said.

"In Islam, the Wasatiyyah (intermediacy) concept is the right way for Muslims, obeying God in His wish for them to be fair not only to other Muslims but also the followers of other religions," Najib said.

Najib said the values that promote a sense of togetherness in all religions, calling for good conduct towards one another, would lead to harmony and a peaceful nation.

The prime minister said that strength in planning transformation of the country depended on stability and harmony.

He said the people should continue to build on the harmony among members of the various creeds so that no sceptic can claim it would not last.

Najib said the setting up of a committee to promote interfaith harmony last year was one way to facilitate better understanding.

He said the committee was a mechanism for bringing the leaders of all religions under an umbrella to plan ways to improve relations among people of various faiths.

- Bernama

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/156014>