

Moderation is the way forward, says Najib

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has called on the world community to embrace moderation as the best course of action and way forward.

He said moderation was not an alien concept to mankind and neither was it only theoretical in nature.

Moderation could help to create a better future for mankind as manifested by leaders in earlier civilisations, he said.

“The real divide is not between East and West or between the developed or developing worlds of even between Muslims and non-Muslims.

“It is between moderates and extremists of all religions,” he said when delivering a lecture at Sheldonian Theatre, University of Oxford Monday.

His lecture was entitled 'Coalition of Moderates and Inter- Civilisational Understanding'.

The prime minister is on a two-day visit to the United Kingdom at the invitation of the Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies (Oxcis).

Quoting and citing testimony of moderation embraced in earlier civilisations of Islam, the West and renowned leaders such as Mahatma Ghandi and Nelson Mandela, Najib said the principle of moderation was not new in Islam and it was also advocated in Christianity and other faiths.

“There is no such thing as liberal Islam or extremist Islam, a conservative Islam or an enlightened Islam, a jihadist Islam or an appeasing Islam, a modern Islam or a medieval Islam.

“There is only Islam, a complete way of life. Being moderate cannot in any way be equated to a wimp, unprincipled, weak or appeasing,” he said.

Peaceful co-existence important in Islam

The prime minister stressed that diversity, dialogue and peaceful co-existence were important themes in Islam.

“In the holy Quran, Allah expounds, that the very reason He created human beings into distinct nations and tribes was as a blessing so that humanity may embrace and celebrate its diversity,” he said.

Najib said that those who strapped explosives on their bodies and blew themselves up were not matyrs and did not represent Islam.

He said a world free from terrorism was possible but it needed goodwill among the faithful of all creeds, required a vanguard of moderates, demanded from being a silent majority and to start reflecting the courage of conviction.

“We must address the underlying causes of global violence and able to differentiate between the symptoms and the root causes. Only then we can achieve a lasting solutions.”

The prime minister said the responsibility to voice out solutions was not only on the Muslims but also from other religions and faiths.

There was a need to hear concerted voices from moderates in all countries and people from all walks of

life, stressed Najib.

He urged those who cherished moderation, dignity and justice everywhere to stand firm and ensure their voices were heard.

"That is why we are all here this evening, to foster, not a clash of civilisations but to further an understanding, and perhaps even a celebration of our difference and, at the same time, of everything we share.

"Modernisation and moderation must go hand in hand. Our dialogue must continue," stressed the prime minister.

Najib also spoke at length and related the Malaysian experiences in managing diversity and plurality, which saw Malaysia decide on integration as opposed to assimilation.

Extremism a serious challenge

"Malaysians accept their diversity. We do not merely tolerate each other but we also embrace and celebrate.

"By leveraging the robustness and dynamism of our diversity, we have created a foundation for our national resilience," he said.

He said in Malaysia, Islam was synonymous with moderation, inclusiveness and good governance.

Being practiced as a way of life in Malaysia, Najib said, the government advocated a path of of wasatiyah or justly balanced moderation whether in formulating and executing domestic policies or in conducting international relations.

In following the best Islamic traditions, Malaysia he said, would not waver from supporting what is right and just, notwithstanding whether the cause was championed by the Islamic world or beyond.

Saying that terrorism and extremism were serious challenges, the prime minister said to resolve the problems required clear thinking based on objective assessment of the situation.

He cited that the unresolved Middle East problem and the plight of the Palestinian people had haunted the global conscience for too long.

Najib reiterated Malaysia's unequivocal support for the struggle of the Palestinian people for an independent and sovereign nation.

Citing events unfolding across the Arab world in recent months that had created chaos and confusion, he said the world community should not lose sight of the fact that these countries and peoples now face a fateful choice.

"The choice between extremism and intolerance that closes in to fill the void or a peaceful, democratic moderation that will grant them more freedom of expression, not less," he added.

- Bernama