

Najib urges repair of ethnic ties
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Prime Minister Najib Razak has called on Malaysians to rid the multicultural nation of racial tensions, six months into an administration that has seen several episodes of ethnic unrest.

In his first message as prime minister to mark Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Najib urged the country late Saturday to put aside differences in the pursuit of a better future.

"Let's break down the walls of prejudice, hatred and apathy for the sake of our children's future," he was quoted as saying by state news agency *Bernama*.

"Let us make use of occasions like this to restore and strengthen relations among us Muslims and among us Malaysians," he added.

Najib's comments come after 12 Malays were charged earlier this month with sedition and illegal assembly over an explosive protest against the relocation of a Hindu temple that saw a severed cow's head paraded and abused.

The cow is considered a sacred animal to Hindus.

In April, the government said it would ban parents from secretly converting children after a furore erupted over the case of an ethnic Indian woman who faced losing custody of her three children after her estranged husband converted them to Islam without her consent.

Conversion rows, including "body-snatching" cases in which Islamic authorities have battled with relatives over the remains of people whose religion is disputed, are common in Muslim-majority Malaysia.

The tussles have led to allegations that the country is being "Islamised" and that the rights of ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities are being eroded.

Open house in Sri Perdana

Meanwhile, *Bernama* reported that 50,000 people flocked to Sri Perdana, the official residence of the prime minister in Putrajaya, for a colourful open house hosted by Najib for the first time as PM.

Najib, in pink baju Melayu, wife Rosmah Mansor and cabinet ministers mingled with the guests at the event which in the last five years was held at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

Foreign heads of mission and corporate figures, including Najib's younger brother Nazir Razak, who is the chief executive officer of CIMB Group, were also present.

Malaysians from all walks of life were treated to a spread that included all-time favourites such as satay, ketupat, lemang, thosai with dhal curry and fried kwayteow.

Local artistes entertained the crowd during the four-hour open house which kicked off at 11am.

Earlier, Najib and Rosmah had breakfast with Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Nur Zahirah before attending Aidilfitri prayers at Masjid Negara.

Najib, Rosmah and their daughter also visited his father's grave inside the Warriors' Mausoleum after the prayers.

Speaking to reporters later, the prime minister said he was happy with the attendance at the open house.

"The open house is held at the Sri Perdana this time around as this is the house of the people, and they are also able to get to know the cabinet ministers," he said.

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