

**Gov't pledges to respect all religions**  
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Malaysia is strongly committed to upholding the true values of all religions, Najib Abdul Razak said today.

"Religion teaches us to be tolerant, caring and respectful of the beliefs and practices of others. In our multi-racial society, we must constantly remind ourselves of the values that bind us together," he said in his speech at a Christmas reception organised by the Christian Federation of Malaysia at the St Thomas Church today.

"We are bound by our common destiny as 1Malaysia. We are bound by our common heritage. We are bound by our need to forge ahead as one nation to face the challenges that lie ahead," he added.

The text of his speech was read out by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Idris Jala.

The prime minister said Idris' presence at the reception represented the strong commitment of the Barisan Nasional government to the freedom of worship that had been practised in Malaysia since the country's independence.

Najib said he was happy to see that the people were responding to the many initiatives introduced by the government to provide a better future for the current and future generations.

"Our 'People First, Performance Now' campaign is not a mere slogan. It is a commitment to action," he stressed.

Religious festivities had become more meaningful by focusing on helping the disadvantaged and less fortunate in society, said Najib as he urged Malaysians to give generously.

The prime minister said the government had identified the hardcore poor throughout the country and would redouble its effort to help every Malaysian get out of the poverty cycle.

"We will bring speedy economic development to all communities regardless of their ethnic origins, religions, cultures or geographical locations," he said.

Among those present at the reception were the supreme head of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church Reverend Dr Joseph Mar Thoma, and opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

- *Bernama*

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