

Najib Calls For Mutual Respect Among Adherents Of Religions
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SEPANG -- Najib Tun Razak said on Friday adherents of any religion in the country should accord respect to other religions before they can expect to be respected in turn.

The prime minister delivered this message before about 3,000 people who had turned up to greet him upon his return from official visits to Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom and Italy, at the KL International Airport here.

During his two-day visit to Italy, Najib met with Pope Benedict XVI at the summer place of the pontiff at Castel Gandolfo near Rome.

Najib said Pope Benedict was kind enough to accept him in audience during the latter's holiday.

"He made an exception to meet with me. I met with the Pope Benedict because I wanted to show that we are an inclusive government," he said.

Najib said the government could engage with those who loved peace and those who respected Islamic leadership.

"We accept them. We can engage with them. We can have dialogue with them because we want to uphold peace in this world," he added.

Najib said Pope Benedict was receptive to the idea of the Global Movement of the Moderates to counter extremism initiated by him.

On the visit to Rome, Najib brought along a delegation of leaders of various religions who held discussions with the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

Included in the delegation were Najib's wife, Rosmah Mansor, Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Jamil Khir Baharom, Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Bernard Dompok, Chairman of the National Fatwa (Edict) Council Prof Dr Abdul Shukor Husin and Archbishop Murphy Nicholas Xavier Pakiam.

Najib's meeting with Pope Benedict was the second between a Malaysian prime minister and the pope. Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad met with Pope John Paul II in June 2002.

The Holy See is the universal government of the Catholic Church and operates from Vatican City State, a sovereign, independent territory of 0.44 sq km.

The Pope is the ruler of both Vatican City State and the Holy See.

The Holy See, as the supreme body of government of the Catholic Church, is a sovereign juridical entity under international law.

(Bernama)

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