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Think of positives, says Najib

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KUALA LUMPUR: Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has asked Malaysians, particularly politicians, to stop "raising contentious issues in a contentious manner" and cast all polemics aside on the occasion of the 50th Merdeka celebrations.

"We should be watchful of what we say, not because we cannot say it, but because we must know how best to say it.

"Is the pursuit of political support the be all and end all of a political party? Are we so desperate for votes that we are willing to sow hatred and suspicion?" he asked at the launching the New Straits Times (Malaysia) Bhd's "Road To Nationhood — Unity Amidst Diversity" photo exhibition here yesterday. The exhibition was jointly organised with Bandar Raya Developments Bhd.

Najib said politicians seeking support must never employ the principle that the end justifies the means.

He agreed that Malaysians should not gloss over the country's flaws and sweep problems under the carpet but he questioned why some were bent on suggesting that things are worse now.

"Why are some of us, 50 years on, keener to think of the negatives rather than the positives? No, things are much better than before. It is only that we have higher expectations than before."

He said many Malaysians had spoken of the need for the nation to be more united but used a divisive logic in their arguments.

"Which nation would be better off divided? Who among us would benefit from a country divided? Each of us must ask ourselves what we have done to promote national unity."



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his younger brother, Datuk Mohd Nazim Razak, are happy to receive a framed picture of their mother in her younger days. It was presented to them after the launch of the 'Road to Nationhood' exhibition entitled 'Unity Amidst Diversity' at the Bangsar Shopping Centre yesterday. With them are New Straits Times Press chief executive officer Datuk Syed Faisal Albar (right), BRDB chairman Datuk Mohd Moiz (second from left) and New Straits Times group editor Datuk Syed Nadzri Syed Harun (third from right).

Najib said there were more similarities than differences between Malaysians.

"I would say many of us share a common sense of decency, our desire for good and, on the subject of nation-building, we are pragmatists rather than chauvinists.

"We are as our favourite dish — a *rojak* of a nation. We are the sum of distinct parts brought together by the gravy of idealism, goodwill and a sense of nationhood."

Najib said Malaysians who were aware of their ethnic backgrounds and beliefs were also brought together by the

sense of togetherness, experienced through thick and thin.

"I believe it is a disservice to the spirit of our nation and founding fathers if we keep harping on what would keep us apart, rather than what has kept us together for half a century," he said.

Najib said there were many doubters, even at home, when the nation's leaders thought of seeking self-rule more than 50 years ago.

"How do we get the various races together for a common cause?

"There must have been many who were counting the

days for the ambitious experiment to fail."

Najib said the idea of nationhood was introduced with a proviso that the undertaking of self-governance would not work if Malaysians did not learn to respect and love each other.

"It was true then, it is true now."

He said the nation survived and thrived by marrying idealism and pragmatism, which had helped Malaysia prosper in spite of its diversity.

"We must have done something right all these years. Of course, we could do better,

and we should always strive for that."

On this Merdeka Day, Najib appealed to Malaysians to leave politics aside, if only for a moment, to bask in the glory of the founding fathers' wisdom and what the country had achieved.

"This Aug 31, let us instead remember the sacrifices of those who came before us. Let us celebrate all who put our faith in the democratic system.

"Let us celebrate the success that is Malaysia. Let us celebrate 50 years of nationhood, sacrifice, tolerance and co-operation," he said.