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Don't fan racial fire

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KUALA LUMPUR: Do not play with fire when it comes to the various races in the country because once it is lit, it may be hard to put out, warned Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak.

Speaking at the National Deepavali Open House organised by the Culture, Arts and Heritage Ministry near KL Sentral yesterday, Najib stressed that unity was a crucial foundation in developing the country and shaping a strong and successful society.

"Whatever the leaders do for the country, whether it is development, or to defend races, or to bring our country to the developed status and achieve Vision 2057, it must all be based on unity between the races.

"Nothing is impossible if we have this factor as the backbone in our mission and through it, we can achieve great success and serve as a model of a multi-cultural country to all other countries," he said.

Our "complex and society of variety" is sometimes seen as a weakness, he said, and echoed the prime minister's recent

statement that each race had its own sensitivities. "We have to change our mindset and see this (multi-cultural society) as our country's strength," Najib said.

When facing racial or religious issues, he said, the most suitable approach would be discussion and negotiations based on the understanding among the country's leaders.

Najib also urged the people to observe three main factors in working towards maintaining the peace. These are the values our founding fathers practised and fought for in achieving unity and independence; upholding the Federal Constitution; and practising the principles of the Rukun Negara which was drawn up after the May 13, 1969 tragedy.

"If we can follow these approaches, we will be on our way to building the right foundation, for our strength," he said.

On the Coalition for a Clean and Fair Election's (Bersih) demonstration on Saturday, Najib said: "There is no need for roadside demonstrations. This is not our culture."

He added that if the Opposition could gather 10,000 supporters, the government

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could gather bigger numbers. "But what is the point of this? These (acts) will expose the country to possibilities of destruction.

"It will destroy what we have built - which took a long time. It is easier to destroy but it takes a long time to build," he said.

Earlier, Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister Datuk Seri Utama Dr Rais Yatim said Malaysians were lucky to live in a multi-cultural society as it enabled them to celebrate the festivities of other races together.

"Even in this drizzle, people

have come to join in the event and give respect to the country's leaders and to each other.

"Some people were advised not to join us and there were SMSes that said there was no need to participate in these programmes.

"I congratulate the people who turned up today, as it shows they respect the government and Hindu devotees," Rais said.

Among those present were MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and his wife Datin Seri Indrani and Najib's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor.