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Protect nation's image abroad, Najib tells pilgrims

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Safe travels: Najib (centre) shaking hands with pilgrims with (from left) Saudi Arabia Ambassador Datuk Fahad Abdullah Hamad Al-Rashid, Jamil Khir and Abdul Azeez (fifth from left).

PETALING JAYA: Malaysian pilgrims must protect the country's image internationally while performing their haj in Saudi Arabia.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the Saudi Government had always acknowledged Malaysia's pilgrims as being among the best in the world as they are law abiding and respect the local culture.

"I would like to inform everyone, that each time I meet the King of Saudi, from the previous to the current one, they have all described Malaysian pilgrims' behaviour as good.

"This year, I would like the pilgrims to maintain the tradition, so that each one of you will receive the same respect and recognition from other Islamic nations especially from the host country," he said in his opening remarks at the sending-off of the sixth batch, consisting of 270 pilgrims, at Menara Tabung Haji yesterday.

The first batch of 450 Malaysian haj pilgrims arrived at the Prince Mohammad Bin AbdulAziz airport in Medina at 1.30pm on Sunday.

There are 22,320 Malaysian pilgrims this year.

They will be flown on 64 flights using Malaysian Airlines and Saudi Arabian Airlines aircraft.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment in providing the best management and services for pilgrims to go perform their haj via Lembaga Tabung Haji.

"The Government subsidises RM7,290 for each pilgrim the first time they perform their haj each year and we hope that it will ease their burden," said Najib who also thanked the Saudi government.

He reminded pilgrims to always take care of their health, and be physically and mentally prepared for the pilgrimage.

Also present were Najib's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom, Senator Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki and Tabung Haji chairman Datuk Seri Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim.