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PM: Focus on moderation

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Asean's Muslims should speak as one, says Najib

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PUTRAJAYA: Asean, which has over 240 million Muslim population, should speak as one about the moderation and heritage that have become the region's heritage, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

In these dark times where there is negative perception against Islam and its followers, he said the message that Islam was a religion of peace, justice and inclusivity needed to be spread far and wide.

"For that is the story of Islam in our region.

"It is one that we must repeat to both ourselves and to others so that they do not fall for the falsehoods of the terrorists who blaspheme the name of Islam, and who have brought death and destruction to so many," he said.

Speaking at the launch of the Asean Mosque Festival, Najib said Islam's story of peace was dearly evident in this region as reflected in how Muslims here live side by side, in co-operation and harmony with Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Confucians, Taoists and others.

"It is a story that we must actively rediscover by re-learning our history and drawing on the unique traditions that have been developed in our part of the world and are still being developed today.

"White mosques are known as places of worship for Muslims, they also act as centres for education and as places at the heart of communities that helped bring people together and not just



Taking it in: Najib admiring the painting of the Putra Mosque during the Asean Mosque Festival in Putrajaya.

Muslims," Najib added.

As Asean's chair this year, Najib said Malaysia was pleased to launch the festival, an initiative aimed at empowering transformational values of the mosques.

"This is an opportunity for us to see what we all share and to cele-

brate the common humanity that transcends that which could divide us.

"That is the true spirit of Asean; 10 nations, hundreds of millions, different ethnicities and faith.

"Yes, we are many. But we are also one," he added.

The inaugural Asean Mosque Festival gathers intellectuals, Islamic scholars as well as the regional community of all races and cultural backgrounds to provide insights on the benefits and opportunities that mosques could create.