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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday warned Muslims of the threat of liberalism and extremism to the community.

He said Muslims were faced with a threat which could destroy the image of Islam. Citing the controversial Charlie Hebdo caricatures of Prophet Muhammad in Europe as an example, Najib said they mistook freedom of expression as the "freedom to offend".

He said those who called themselves liberal Muslims viewed religious principles lightly and because of that there were now LGBTs (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual community), human rights champions and others.

"Islam has been viewed with intense negativity by the global mainstream media.

"*Wasatiyyah*, or moderation, is the best way of resolving the crisis faced by Muslims worldwide," he said at a gathering of 50 "Rakan Wasatiyyah" (Friends of Moderation) at his official residence at Seri Perdana, here.

Present was Religious Adviser to the Prime Minister Tan Sri Dr Abdullah Md Zin, who is also chairman of the Malaysia Wasatiyyah Institute.

Najib said Islam's image was be-

ing tarnished through various mediums and the negative perception of Islam showed by global mainstream news channels and news portals did not help.

"Studies indicate that Islamophobia is now an industry that can generate US\$200 million (RM717.6 million). I don't know how they came up with that number, but that is the view.

"In fact, almost every day, we are shown negative images of Islam through the lens of mainstream media as well as the video game industry, which has become the craze among youths," he said.

Najib asked whether Muslims had the right mental framework to face such situations.

It was disheartening, he said, to see some Muslims who went "extreme", which were against the principles of Islam.

Extremist groups such as the Islamic State had clearly strayed far from the true Islamic principles of jihad, he said.

On the government's efforts to uphold Islam and address the threat of extremism, Najib said his administration had done much to protect the country from such threats, including drafting the Prevention of Terrorism Bill (POTA) 2015 which was passed at the Dewan Rakyat recently and amendments to the Sedition Act.

The prime minister said the im-

provements to the Sedition Act were to uphold the country's peace without undermining the spirit of democracy.

Under the improved Sedition Act, he said, it was not an offence to criticise the government, but it was an offence to overthrow a government without going through the process of democracy.

Earlier, the prime minister urged those who upheld *Wasatiyyah* (moderation) to share their views with the rakyat.

He told "Rakan Wasatiyyah" members to play their roles in helping the community to understand the concept of *Wasatiyyah*, which could be effective in countering terrorism.