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PRIME NEWS

PM's call to Netanyahu

COMPASSION: Najib seeks Israeli counterpart's goodwill on Palestine issue

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday expressed hope that his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, will not remain belligerent towards the Palestinians.

Recalling the speech he gave at the United Nations General Assembly in New York recently, Najib said he mentioned the Jewish dictum, "what is hateful to you, don't do to your fellow", to drive home a humanitarian message.

"In fact, after I quoted that (saying), just by chance, it was immediately after Netanyahu had spoken at the General Assembly.

"I hope Netanyahu will heed the saying I included in my speech," he said at the Religion and Peaceful Coexistence Seminar held at Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM) here.

In his opening speech at the seminar, Najib said distinctions between religions should not stop people of different faiths from collectively addressing global issues, such as discrimination, injustice, violence and even climate change.

In saying Islam promoted unity regardless of religious backgrounds, he reiterated the importance of respecting cultural and religious diversity.

"At the heart of Islamic teachings is the eternal message of justice and compassion, of equality and humanity, and of peace and solidarity.

"This is contrary to the false misrepresentations of a fanatical minority, who traduce our religion with their barbaric acts.

"We must make a firm commitment to establishing a culture of tol-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak speaking to representatives of different faiths at the Religion and Peaceful Coexistence Seminar in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. To his left is Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia chairman and former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Bernama pic

erance and harmony, to better promote the well-being of the people, putting aside what may divide us as communities."

Najib said building peace and maintaining harmony between different religions was an important and noble endeavour.

He said in the context of Malaysia, most people were adherents of one religion or another.

"To establish a peaceful coexistence like in Malaysia is indeed a challenge.

"But, it is something we always strive to do and will continue to do, informed by wisdom, kindness and justice.

"One way we can do this in Malaysia — and elsewhere in the world — is by accepting the reality that there are differences in religions and, then, coming to the common realisation that we can agree to disagree."

He said in promoting unity, it was important to focus on what the people had in common.

"There are many similarities in the values promoted by different religions.

"We should embrace them in the interests of all, rather than magnify differences to serve political or strategic agendas."

In the same vein, said the prime

minister, the concept of *wassatiyah* (moderatori) could serve to protect society from falling into a state of extremism.

"The *wassatiyah* approach is important because it means 'balanced' and 'the best'.

"Without it, society will easily fall into extremism, which will result in radical groups, like the Islamic State, or liberal extremists."

Present were IKIM chairman and former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom and IKIM director-general Professor Datin Dr Azizah Baharuddin.