

Newspaper

New Straits Times

Date

25 December 2015

# PM: Let's celebrate our diversity

NST-25/12/2015

**STEADFAST:** Govt will uphold freedom of religion as enshrined in Constitution, says Najib in Christmas message

KUALA LUMPUR

THE government will ensure that no Malaysians are left behind as the country progresses towards an advanced nation, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

In a Christmas message on his blog, Najib said Malaysians were blessed to live in a nation with different ethnic groups that lived together in peace and harmony.

He said the government would remain steadfast in upholding the freedom of religion as enshrined in the Constitution.

"Every Christmas, Christians come together to commemorate the birth of Jesus. The Christmas season brings good tidings, hope and reconciliation for all Christians.

"Indeed, we live in a nation with diverse cultures and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation.

"Let us celebrate this festive season and welcome the new year with a brand new resolution, and make it our personal mission to assume responsibility in bringing Malaysia to the pinnacle of success."

He said Christmas, like other Malaysian celebrations, should be greeted with enthusiasm.

"This is the time when we come together to share joy and laughter, to reconcile and strengthen our bonds with friends and family while we enjoy the food we love.

"To all Malaysian Christians, let me once again wish you a Merry Christmas and to all Malaysians, a Happy New Year."

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Li-

ow Tiong Lai hoped that everyone would take this opportunity to celebrate the nation's cultural diversity.

"Today, I would like to urge all citizens to put aside our differences and join hands as one united Malaysian family," he said, adding that everyone must resist elements in society that do not champion the nation's cultural diversity.

In **Kota Kinabalu**, Yang di-Pertua Negeri Sabah Tun Juhar Mahiruddin said Christmas and other festivities played an important role in maintaining tolerance and harmony.

Juhar said the people should not undermine different cultures, customs and religions.

"Do not take advantage of freedom of speech to jeopardise our harmony here.

"Our diversity should become a strength and an edge."

Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman said Malaysians must not succumb to narrow-minded rhetoric that sowed hatred and suspicion among people of different races and cultures.

"Sabah, in particular, can be proud of the fact that we can look beyond differences that come with diversity, focusing instead on similarities. This is one of the reasons Sabah has progressed well over the years."

In **Kuching**, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem said Sarawakians were fortunate that, despite coming from different religious and racial backgrounds, they could live as one happy and united people.



**Delilah Francisca De Mello, 1**, playing with the reindeer statues adorning one of the houses at the Portuguese settlement in Ujong Pasir, Malacca, yesterday. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak says Christmas, like other Malaysian celebrations, should be greeted with enthusiasm. Pic by Muhammad Zuhairi Zuber

He said living in peace and harmony alongside each other had been the tradition in Sarawak and would continue to be so.

"But I believe the prevailing unity of Sarawakians did not come by chance. We have been nurturing it together by learning to be moderate and to accept others who are different from us."

He said the first few thoughts that came to his mind when assuming

the post of chief minister was how to care for the poor and less fortunate.

"For this purpose, the state will spend almost RM600 million next year to build more roads and bridges to increase connectivity in rural areas.

"The state has also spent RM500 million this year and will spend another RM500 million next year under the rural transformation programme, as announced in the recent state budget, to further upgrade the quality of life in rural areas."

**Page 1 pic:** Joannes Lubuk (second from right) and his wife, Soutim Sumbin (third from right), celebrating Christmas at a relative's house in Kampung Bundu Tuhan, Kundasang, yesterday. With them is Mount Kinabalu Guide Association chairman Richard Soibi (right).