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Najib: Use Deepavali to strengthen multiracial ties

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PETALING JAYA: The Deepavali celebration should be a platform to strengthen the relationship and understanding among Malaysians, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"I still remember the Deepavali celebrations when I was small, as with my parents, we would visit our Hindu friends and savoured delicious food such as *thosai*, *chapati*, *murukku* and others," he said in his Deepavali message.

He said that the spirit of Deepavali comes from the victory of light over darkness.

"This spirit should reflect Malaysia's journey as a multicultural country in facing a variety of challenges and hurdles, so that Malaysians can enjoy a peaceful

and prosperous life," he added.

He also reiterated the Government's commitment to empower the country's Indian community under the Indian Socioeconomy Blueprint that will be launched next year.

MCA president Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said the country's multiculturalism had always been its "greatest asset".

"As we come together with family and friends to celebrate this special occasion, it is my hope that Malaysians will take this time to reaffirm and strengthen the bonds of unity that form the very fabric of our nation's identity," he said in his Deepavali message.

Liow said Malaysians were fortunate to be able to enjoy "such rich

and diverse traditions" together.

"Let us strive to nurture and protect these harmonious ties that make us one *rakyat*."

"Together, we can ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy these traditions and festivals with their loved ones," he said.

He said Malaysians needed to be "steadfast" in their resolve to reject extremism and intolerance.

"Regardless of whatever challenges lie ahead, I am confident that where there is unity and acceptance, there is much we can accomplish and achieve," he said.

MIC president Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said Hindus in Malaysia should use the occasion to foster unity and understanding among Malaysians of all races.

"Deepavali, which marks victory over evil, is very appropriate and shows that the people need to get rid of all malice and move towards a closer rapport among themselves.

"It is a golden opportunity to create a feeling of friendship among the races and strengthen the family institution," he said in a statement.

The Hindu community, he said, should invite Malaysians from all walks of life to come together to celebrate Deepavali.

Gerakan vice-president Datuk Kohilan Pillay said the Government's blueprint to help better the Indian community was welcoming news.

"The advent of Deepavali offers an opportune period of introspection to reflect on the wellbeing and

happiness of the Indian community," he said in a statement.

Malaysian Associated Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Tan Sri, K. Kenneth Eswaran said the strength of the nation lies in its diversity.

The sharing of the celebratory spirit would further help foster ties among Malaysians, he said.

He also urged Indians in the country to be united and to fully embrace the spirit of Deepavali.

"Unity will be the pillar of the Indian community," he added.



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