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'Sports, food and humour bind us'

PM highlights 'moments of unity' in his N-Day address

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KUALA LUMPUR: Sports, the love for food and the special humour of cartoonist Lat – these are among the things that bring us together as Malaysians.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak pointed this out as he paid tribute to the country's sportsmen and sportswomen in his live 59th National Day address to the nation.

Urging Malaysians to recognise the goodness and strength of the country's diversity, Najib highlighted what he described as recent "moments of unity".

These included the badminton fans, most of whom were Malays, cheering on badminton singles player Datuk Lee Chong Wei at Dataran Putrajaya during the Rio Olympics final, he said.

He picked out Lee, cyclist Azizulhasni Awang, men's doubles shuttlers Goh V Shem and Tan Wee Kiong, diver Pandelega Rinong and her synchronised diving partner Cheong Jun Hoong, along with Lat – or Datuk Mohammad Nor Khalid – and the owners of the popular "Vanggey" Nasi Kandar stall in Ipoh as icons of unity.

"This is also the same for the film *Ola Bola* which instilled a sense of unity among all



Fantastic display: Fireworks going off after the 59th National Day countdown at KLCC, Kuala Lumpur. — CHAN TAK KONG/The Star

Malaysians," Najib said.

He said this was what was beautiful and special about Malaysia – the spirit of unity and closeness among all races.

Malaysia, said Najib, had not come this far to fail and urged Malaysians to appreciate the success of almost 60 years of nationhood.

"I am speaking here, not only as the Prime Minister or a leader of a party but someone who is an Anak Malaysia," he said at the Putra World Trade Centre here last night.

Najib also urged Malaysians to guard against "moments of disunity" which could disrupt peace in the country including from those who poison the minds of the people.

"Merdeka means standing on our own two feet, according to our own mould of what we want. Merdeka means being free of outside interference," he said.

In PUTRAJAYA, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the responsibility of ensuring the nation remained "Merdeka" or independent fell on



the shoulders of all Malaysians.

"We can have our differences, be it in politics, religion or ideology. In fact, we celebrate and respect diversity.

"But no matter what our differences are, we must all come together when it comes to defending the nation and ensuring that Malaysia's sovereignty remains intact," said the Deputy Prime Minister in his Merdeka Day message.

Dr Ahmad Zahid said that unity among Malaysians was important for maintaining peace, prosperity and progress of the nation.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan said it was everyone's responsibility to hand over a nation greater than the one they had inherited.

"That is why we must make informed and wise decisions as far as the country's interest is concerned. There is no one that we can blame or be held accountable for any wrong decision but us."

Watch the video
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