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No worries for non-Muslims

Najib: Syariah index efforts won't infringe their rights

PUTRAJAYA: The rights and privileges of non-Muslims as citizens of this country will not be infringed in efforts taken to further meet the objectives of Syariah law, the Prime Minister has assured.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said while the Government wanted to ensure that more of its programmes and policies were in accordance with Islamic laws, it was mindful of Malaysia's diverse society.

"Malaysians of different race, religion and culture have been living harmoniously for decades and the peace that we enjoy today will be fiercely guarded. We will not allow anyone or anything to disrupt this.

"Rest assured that whatever the Government is doing, including having a Syariah index to gauge our practices, will not be against the Federal Constitution. Neither will it affect the lifestyle of non-Muslims. There is no need for them to be concerned," he said when announcing the inaugural findings of the Syariah index here.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom and represent-



Encouraging figures: Najib receiving the Majlis Perdana Ulama-Umara 2016 resolution from Ulama-Umara Malaysia secretariat chairman Datuk Jailani Ngah as Dr Ahmad Zahid looks on in Putrajaya.

atives from Jakim as well as state religious authorities.

Najib said having the index in place was not meant to deny or threaten the rights of non-Muslims but was in fact an initiative to prove to the world that the administration would continue to uphold and defend good universal values, including that of Islam.

"What we are doing actually reflects the true value of Islam. Our actions are moderate and we respect the rights of others to practise their own faith and culture.

"The Syariah index should not be misinterpreted as an attempt to suppress the freedom and rights of the non-Muslims enshrined in the Constitution," Najib said.

The Prime Minister added that the Malay Rulers' authority and position as head of the religion would not be affected nor weakened by the Government's efforts, adding that any plans would be brought to the Rulers' for their advice and guidance.

Najib also announced that Malaysia scored 75.42% in the Syariah index for 2015, which showed that a good part of the country's administrative system and policies were based on *maqasid* Syariah or objectives of the Syariah.

The Syariah index, launched in February last year, is a scientific method that seeks to evaluate the seriousness of government efforts to meet Islamic standards concern-

ing policies and programmes.

The Government used the index to evaluate eight fields; it scored 82.5% for education, 87.19% for Syariah law, 65.27% (economy), 79.19% (politics), 73.92% (health), 68.52% (social), 66.47% (culture) and 62.31% for infrastructure and surroundings.

"While the figures are encouraging, we aim to improve our performance to score even higher next year. To do this, we will have to serve the people better, find solutions to their woes and improve their wellbeing.

"This is what the Government has continuously strived to do and we will keep on doing so for the people," pledged Najib.