

**Let's Make The Voice Of Reason Louder, Says Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 17 (Bernama) -- "It is time for the massed ranks of moderates everywhere to stand up and say to the extremists with a single breath a firm, resounding 'no'."

With that clarion call, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak set the tone of the inaugural Global Movement of Moderates Conference which he opened here today.

Saying that "we cannot rid the world of extreme views by force", he drove home the point that tolerance and understanding could best be fostered not by silencing the voice of hatred but by making the voice of reason louder.

"Persuasion, negotiation and cooperation -- these must be our weapons in the face of enmity and malice," the Malaysian leader said before hundreds of delegates from over 70 countries.

Making his case for the world community to embrace moderation in the fight against extremism, Najib pointed out that history had been made not by those who espoused extremism but by those who, without surrendering their beliefs, stayed true to the path of moderation.

The prime minister said everybody was familiar with the extraordinary strength of will and leadership of India's Mahatma Gandhi, South Africa's Nelson Mandela and Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi.

"But you don't have to be a world leader to be an inspiration. Moderates can make a difference wherever they make a stand," said Najib, who first mooted the idea for the movement in his speech at the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2010.

In his thought-provoking speech in the Malaysian capital, Najib painted extremists as people who were driven by orthodoxies -- a set of messianic ideals characterised by crass simplifications, misrepresentations and outright lies.

"Rather than celebrating the sanctity of life, as is required by all religions, extremists emphasise the glory of the afterlife.

"Rather than seeking out and embracing difference, they espouse ignorance, intolerance and introspection," he said, adding that extremists also feared change, turning their backs on progress and seeking refuge in an idealised world that always stays the same.

"The essence, and perhaps the attraction, of extremism is its apparent simplicity -- so it falls to movements and gatherings like this one to interrogate these easy truisms with subtlety, intelligence and vigour," Najib said.

He also wondered how acts of extremism by a tiny minority of Muslims came to be seen as a true reflection of the whole of the Islamic faith, and to overshadow the extremism perpetrated right across the world by people of all faiths and none.

"Such pernicious views can't be left unchallenged, and it's not enough to say, as many have done, that the solution to extremism is simply for more Muslims to speak up and speak out.

"We need to hear from moderates of all religions in all countries and from all walks of life -- and when we do, the prize of peace is there for all to see," he said.

Najib said extremism had never been welcomed inside mosques, churches, synagogues and temples, and that perpetuating hatred was, by its very nature, a lonely pursuit that flew in the face of widely-held morality.

"And it's this dangerously untethered animus, coupled with a head-in-the-sand refusal to acknowledge the views and values of others, that makes extremism such a potent threat," Najib said.

Turning to Malaysia, the prime minister said the country had long been synonymous not with extremism but with moderation, tolerance and inclusivity.

"In a predominantly Muslim country with substantial communities of Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Taoists and Sikhs, we know well the 'dignity of difference'," he said, pointing out that Malaysians continually strived to be a truly united nation predicated on the values of moderation and the spirit of 1Malaysia.

Najib said maybe he was naive to hope for a world without terror, intolerance and all of the hatred and miseries that man inflicts on man.

"But the price of failure if we dream too small is simply too high to pay. So, let us dare to dream big, let us dare to imagine what was once thought unimaginable.

"And yes, let us dare to answer the clarion call to action," he added.

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