

Najib Calls On Muslims In Southeast Asia To Embrace 'Wasatiyyah'
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has called on Muslims in Southeast Asia to embrace the spirit of 'wasatiyyah' or moderation.

He said Islam practised in moderation was more appealing and readily acceptable in the region.

"If it were true that wasatiyyah was once a model of excellence in the region, then there is a need for us to return to the spirit and soul of wasatiyyah in the wake of challenges that we have to face in the future," he said at the launch of the "Malay Archipelago Seminar - Islam in Southeast Asia: Challenges and Hope" at the Putra World Trade Centre here Saturday.

The text of his speech was read out by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom.

Najib said in reality, efforts to return to wasatiyyah would not come by itself or easily. "While Islam in Southeast Asia has been moderate in character, it is undergoing a process of revivalist change in some segments of society.

"Some Southeast Asians returning from Islamic religious schools in the Middle East and Pakistan have returned with a new, radical, militant, and extremist form of Islam that is more likely to be anti-American or anti-Western in character," he said.

Najib said it would not be too much if he were to say that the same thing was happening in Malaysia, where throughout the decades of the 80s and 90s, there already existed political extremism that finally resulted in disunity among Muslims at every level.

"They used religion to project themselves as the true followers, 'holier than thou' and blessed by Allah.

"To them, political party membership was a ticket to Muslims to go to either heaven or hell. This is the trend, which in reality reflects extremism and radicalism that is increasingly spreading among Muslims," he said.

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