

**Celebrate Christmas In Harmony, Respect - Najib  
Bernama  
Dec 24, 2014**

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Najib Razak has called on Malaysians to once again come together in the spirit of harmony, acceptance and respect in celebrating Christmas Thursday.

Malaysians, he said, should also take the opportunity to celebrate the diversity that made this country so exceptional.

In wishing Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all Malaysian Christians, he said this was the time when family and friends came together, to look back on the year that was with thanks, and to look forward to a new year with hope and goodwill.

"In Malaysia, we are blessed that different ethnicities with different languages and faiths live together as one. '1Malaysia' symbolises this collective unity, emphasising ethnic harmony, national unity and racial tolerance," Najib said in his Christmas Message 2014.

The prime minister reminded that the Malaysian constitution guaranteed the right of all Malaysians to practise their religion.

"And the 10-point solution to address the Bahasa bible and other related issues

that was agreed upon in 2011, and which must be consistent with state laws

was introduced as a way to manage our diversity and protect this right," he said.

Najib said he was proud of the peace and harmony that had been achieved since the country's independence or Merdeka.

"Regardless of our ethnicity, culture or religion, Malaysians respect each other's religious festivals together in solidarity," he added.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin reminded all parties to show civility and good ethics, and respect for the law in discussing inter-religious matters and issues.

He said this was important for all to together preserve harmony and order among Malaysia's multiracial and multireligious society.

"We should always be rational, set aside our suspicions and prejudices, and find common grounds for all to share.

"Hopefully, the understanding and peaceful living that we have fostered all this while is our

source of strength that contributes to the nation's development," he said in his Christmas Day message.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, said as a plural society, Malaysians should be grateful as each community and religious celebration could be enjoyed with much merriment in a climate of peace and harmony.

"If we look back at the history of the major civilisations of the world, we will find there existed multiracial and multiracial communities whose respect for each other was the source of the civilisations' progress and strength.

"The harmonious relations between the Muslim and Christian communities in Andalusia during the rule of the Islamic Caliphate, for instance, was a fine example of peaceful co-existence which was the source of strength for the Islamic civilisation at that time," he said.

Muhyiddin said such history could teach society that good relations among people from different races, religions and cultures could be the pillar for a people's progress and development.

The deputy prime minister and his family also took the opportunity to wish all Christians in this country a Merry Christmas.

MCA president Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai in his Christmas Day message called on Malaysians to uphold moderation and be mindful of extremist views.

"Regardless of our individual beliefs and ideals, it is important that we all play a part to promote inclusiveness and moderation by preserving freedom of religion and encouraging interfaith dialogue and harmony in our nation," he said in a statement, here, today.

Liow, who is also Transport Minister, said moderate policies would ultimately benefit all citizens, regardless of race, religion and culture.

"Our nation can only continue to develop and rise to greater heights when we don't let our differences stand in the way of mutual trust and respect.

"We are truly fortunate to belong to a nation that is a melting pot of cultures. Our forefathers and leaders have worked tirelessly to attain this unity, and on our part, we each need to work hard at preserving this peace and resisting extremism," he said.

Gerakan president Datuk Mah Siew Keong said: "Christmas is an opportunity for Malaysians to spread the meaning of togetherness, understanding and love.

"In this season of hope and generosity, let us unite as Malaysians to ensure that we are doing everything we can to keep our beloved nation on course for greater stability and prosperity."

Mah, who is also Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said Malaysians had witnessed peace and prosperity as well as challenges and change throughout this year.

"Hence, it is important that we heed to the timeless and universal message in Christmas time.

"Our society ought to continue its path guided by faith and kindness. Regardless of race or religious affiliation, we must lead a life of humility and compassion," he added.

MIC president Datuk Seri G.Palanivel hoped that the less fortunate such as orphans, single mothers, the physically challenged and those living in poverty were not forgotten.

"We should, where possible, extend a helping hand to those who need assistance. Get them involved in the merry-making," he said, adding that Malaysians should also forgive those "who have done ill to us and learn to live harmoniously".

The Natural Resources and Environment Minister also called on various communities in this country to take time off to visit friends in the spirit of 1Malaysia during this festive season.

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