

**Najib: Interfaith harmony key to political, social stability**  
**Free Malaysia Today**  
**May 10, 2017**

**The prime minister says the existence of interfaith harmony is based on mutual understanding and mutual respect which must be propagated and strengthened.**

SHAH ALAM: Malaysia's future depends on continued political and social stability which, in turn, hinges on interfaith harmony among Malaysians, says Prime Minister Najib Razak.

He noted that the existence of interfaith harmony was premised on mutual understanding and mutual respect.

"This is among the intrinsic values that we need to propagate and strengthen," he said at a tea reception marking the national Wesak Day celebration here today.

Najib said the country's founding fathers and all the others had not only laid the foundation of the constitution, but also the values and political basis for generations of Malaysians after them to forge interfaith harmony.

This, he said, should be applied towards greater unity among all Malaysians.

Among those in attendance at today's event were Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai and Malaysia Buddhist Association vice-president Sit Chan Liang.

In the course of the speech, Najib praised Buddhists, who had gathered for the reception, for remaining silent as the Muslim call to prayer was heard.

"This is an example of how we show mutual respect. You gentlemen who profess Buddhism showed respect to the Azan (call to prayer) which is very close to the hearts of Muslims.

"I thank you for showing respect to other religions," he said to applause from the crowd.

Najib reckoned that Malaysia was unique thanks to its links to the great civilisations of Asia that existed in the Malay Archipelago, China and India.

Malaysia, he said, had benefited from all the teachings, learnings, values, cultures, religions and languages from such great civilisations.

Najib said he had just undertaken a successful visit to India, and in not more than 24 hours he would be in China for another visit.

“All these visits cannot be successful without us being the model of a country that is united in diversity,” the prime minister said.

He said Malaysia commanded the respect of many countries throughout the years as it was an exemplary nation in many respects.

“We do not have the tension, conflict, violence that other countries are undergoing,” Najib said, adding that Malaysia was viewed by many as a land of peace and harmony.

“So let’s ensure this will continue in the future. It’s important for us to remind ourselves of the strong values that our respective religions bring.”

Citing Buddhism as an example, he said people of the faith were renowned for compassion, commitment to peace and harmony, and helping the poor and underprivileged.

Najib drove home the point that Malaysians should not let themselves be influenced by extremist elements in society.

The prime minister urged Malaysians to support each other to ensure a stronger and better Malaysia.

“I cannot do it alone as prime minister. The government and civil society cannot do it alone too, but together, we can.

“If we commit ourselves to working together on the basis of mutual respect and understanding, and we believe in interfaith harmony, be moderate at heart, become true to our religion, reject extremism and choose our words wisely, there will be a kinder and gentler Malaysian society,” he said.

Meanwhile, in scenes repeated across the country, devotees thronged temples such as the Buddhist Maha Vihara temple in Brickfields here to mark the occasion.

Despite the erratic weather throughout the day, they continued to come from as early as 6am to offer prayers at the 123-year-old temple.

Neoh Lik Hoey, 38, a temple volunteer for more than 10 years, said this year’s celebration was upbeat and vibrant despite the lack of space due to one of the main buildings undergoing reconstruction.

Wesak Day is the most important day in the Buddhism calendar. It marks the birth, enlightenment and passing of Gautama Buddha on whose teachings Buddhism was founded.

Buddhists commemorate the auspicious day by, among others, fasting and eating vegetarian food, offering prayers, giving alms to the needy and donating blood as well as indulging in self-reflection and supplication.

**Copyright (C) 2009-2016 MToday News Sdn. Bhd. All Rights Reserved.**

Source: <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/05/10/najib-interfaith-harmony-key-to-political-social-stability/>