

BN Committed In Upholding Islam - Najib

KUALA LUMPUR, April 8 (Bernama) -- Although much has been said about the position of Islam in the country, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the Barisan Nasional (BN) government remains committed in supporting Islam in line with the Federal Constitution.

The Prime Minister said this was in line with Article 3 of the Federal Constitution which clearly stated that Islam is the religion of the Federation but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony.

He said if we were to delve deeper and look at it in totality the government had done a lot to ensure Islam continued to grow and the Muslims in the country are protected.

"For example, in Budget 2017, I announced an allocation of RM50 million for government-aided religious schools and RM50 million for registered 'pondok' Islamic religious schools.

"For the first time too, the government allocated RM30 million to synchronise tahfiz education through the National Tahfiz Education Policy. This is an important step in determining that Tahfiz al-Quran institutions continued to flourish and grow," he said in his latest blog post titled "Islam Under the Barisan Nasional".

Najib said the BN-led federal government realised that Quran and Tahfiz Al-Quran education were significant ingredients in preserving Islam, especially in generating Islamic scholars to counter accusations and slander made by extremists against Islam.

"This is also one of the measures taken by the government to curb the spread of extremism in Malaysia.

"(And) this is in line with my vision to develop holistic human resources who are not only academically inclined but are also capable in various aspects including having strong resilience and faith as required in Islam," said the Prime Minister.

In addition, Najib said the welfare of 'imam', 'bilal' and 'siak' groups were also protected as under the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) 15,000 imams nationwide received monthly allowance of RM850 from RM750 previously, 16,000 'siaks' received one-off payment of RM500 while the allowance of religious school teachers involving 33,000 people, was raised to RM900 from RM800 a month.

"God willing, protecting the welfare of those involved in Islamic religious study will be the main agenda of the government in elevating the Islamic religion," he said.

On Haj pilgrim management, the Prime Minister said it is estimated that RM200 million subsidy would be spent by the government this year compared to RM160 million last year.

"Alhamdulillah, with the good relations enjoyed between the Barisan-led government and the Saudi Arabian government, the haj pilgrim quota for Malaysia was increased to 30,200 people," he said.

On the BN government's role in promoting Islam internationally, Najib said the moderation approach adopted by the government had attracted many and Malaysia was seen as a progressive Islamic country in the eyes of the world.

"We have received much international recognition for our efforts in the fight against the so-called Islamic-based terrorism and during my visit to India recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his interest in Malaysia's de-radicalisation programme.

"Our voices were also heard when we protested against the atrocities against the Rohingyas in Myanmar. Well-known scholars such as Mufti Menk too supported Malaysia's efforts in spreading the concept of love and simplicity in Islam," he said.

Najib further emphasised that the concept of moderation, social justice and equality would continue to be maintained including in political affairs, as long as he remained Prime Minister.

"Sometime ago, Muslims in Malaysia were divided and developments were hindered by certain leaders due to political differences.

"Alhamdulillah this has changed. The Muslims in Malaysia are now united to ensure welfare of the Muslims and sanctity of the religion are protected," he said.

In terms of development (in the country), Najib said, no state was left out.

"For example, in drafting the East Coast Rail Line (ECRL) project, Kelantan under the PAS government will also benefit from the development as the last station will be located in Pengkalan Kubor, Tumpat," he said.

Nevertheless, he stressed, there is still a long way to go and much to be done to ensure Malaysia continued to remain a modern and progressive Muslim country.

"Truthfully, this is not an easy task as we are a multi-racial and multi-religious country and we have to consider racial sensitivities when formulating policies to preserve peace and harmony in the country," he said.

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