

MUSLIM INTERESTS

'UPHOLDING ISLAM A PRIORITY'

Malaysia is viewed as a progressive Islamic country due to the 'wasatiyyah' approach, says Najib

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THE Barisan Nasional government will continue to uphold Islam in line with Article 3 of the Federal Constitution, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said.

In a blog post yesterday, Najib said although much had been said of late about the position of Islam in the country, the government had carried out concerted efforts to ensure Islamic growth and the protection of Muslims' interests in the country.

"For example, in the 2017 Budget, the government allocated RM50 million for government-aided religious schools and RM50 million for registered *sekolah pondok* (religious schools).

"For the first time, too, the government allocated RM30 million to streamline tahfiz education through the National Tahfiz Education Policy.

"This is an important step in

charting the direction of our country, ensuring that tahfiz institutions flourish and grow," he wrote on NajibRazak.com.

He said the government realised that the Quran and tahfiz were "significant ingredients" to preserve Islam, especially in preparing Islamic scholars to counter allegations and slander made against the religion.

He said this was one of the government's measures to curb the spread of extremism.

"This is in line with my vision to create holistic human resources, who are not just academically inclined, but also in other aspects, including being pious and having self-esteem, as required in Islam."

Najib said the welfare of imam, *bilal* and *siak* groups were protected, adding that 15,000 imam under the Malaysian Islamic Development Department received an increase in monthly allowance from RM750 to RM850.

"A total of 16,000 *bilal* and *siak* have received a one-off aid of RM500, while Fardhu Ain and Kifayah school teachers' allowances have been increased to RM900 from RM800 monthly, benefiting

almost 33,000 teachers.

"*InsyaAllah* (God willing), the welfare of those in the field of religion will continue to be the government's main agenda in empowering Islam."

He said he was satisfied with the management of haj pilgrims, adding that the government would subsidise an estimated RM200 million this year to ensure Malaysians could fulfil the fifth pillar of Islam.

“The concept of ‘wasatiyyah’, social justice and fairness will continue to be my principle for as long as I am prime minister...

DATUK SERI NAJIB RAZAK

"*Alhamdulillah*, because of the good relations the BN-led government has with the Saudi government, the haj quota for our country has been increased to 30,200 people."

Najib said the *wasatiyyah* (moderate) approach undertaken by the government had attracted many quarters, leading the global audience to view Malaysia as a progressive Islamic country.

He said the country had received international recognition in its fight against terrorism.

"During my visit to India, Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi expressed interest in Malaysia's deradicalisation plan.

"Our voices were also heard

when we protested against the atrocities towards the Rohingya in Myanmar," he said, adding that well-known Islamic scholars, such as Mufti Ismail Menk, supported Malaysia's efforts to spread the religion based on moderation and love.

"The concept of *wasatiyyah*, social justice and fairness will continue to be my principle for as long as I am prime minister, including in politics."

He said Muslims in Malaysia worked together and were united in ensuring that the welfare of Muslims and the sanctity of Islam was preserved.

He said no state was left behind in terms of development, adding that through the East Coast Rail Line project, the Pasled Kelantan government would reap the benefits as the end station would be in Pengkalan Kubor, Tumpat.

"Our journey in upholding Islam is long and a lot still needs to be done to ensure that Malaysia becomes modern and progressive.

"This is not an easy task because we are a multiracial, multi-religious nation, where racial sensitivities must be considered in the formulation of policies to safeguard national security.

"*InsyaAllah*, our efforts to continue to uphold Islam will be blessed."

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