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Nurture spirit of togetherness, says Najib

By Danial Dzulkiyly

danial@mmail.com.my

PETALING JAYA — Malaysia's multiracial and multireligious national identity and its moderate temperament have always been its greatest assets.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the nation's religious and ethnic groups had inculcated the culture of respect and understanding.

"This sense of togetherness has created unity in diversity and it is the bedrock of Malaysia, making our country unique," he said at the

World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017 celebrations at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia in Kepong yesterday

The World Interfaith Harmony Week, celebrated every year on the first week of February, was institutionalised by the United

Nations in 2010 to promote peace and harmony through better understanding of different faiths.

This year's theme is Love of God and Love of the Neighbour.

The celebrations included an interfaith dialogue among Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Tao, Bahai and Orang Asli representatives.

Najib said the spirit of togetherness, which he likened to a tree planted during the formation of the country, needed constant care.

"The seeds of peace and harmony have been planted by our forefathers when they fought for independence. It is because of their aspiration for a better future, the seeds have now grown into a strong tree, whose bountiful rewards we are reaping now," he said.

"However, the culture of

understanding and respect can only be preserved by respecting the rule of law and the Constitution."

Najib quoted an article in the Constitution which protected the practice of all religions.

"Article Three of the Constitution stipulates Islam is the religion of the state. However, other religions can be practised in peace," he said.

Najib said no religion should be mocked or discriminated, even on social media.

"We honour each religion and culture, which can be seen through having Christmas, Hari Gawai, Deepavali, Chinese New Year, among others, as national holidays," he said.

"If everyone adopted this perspective of respect, then we would not have any problems."