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Vasakhi may be made a public holiday: PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat: The government will consider a proposal by the Sikh community to declare Vasakhi a public holiday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the request by the Sikh community will be considered although public holidays in the country have been limited to 16 days.

"We have limited public holidays to 16 days a year, that is why it differs from state to state and some will have more ... we will see whether it is possible (to declare Vasakhi a public holiday)," he said.

Mahathir was speaking after attending the Vasakhi open house and Vasakhi Mela celebrations organised by the National Sikh Organisations of Malaysia Coordinating Council at Kelab Aman here.

He said Vasakhi not being a public holiday does not mean that the government does not recognise the Sikh community's contribution.

"We are well aware of the contribution the community. In those days they were in the armed forces and today they are professionals in many important fields like medicine."

He also pledged to look into the plight of the Sikh Gurdwara in Padang Merbok.

Earlier, the president of the Malaysian Gurdwaras Council, Amar Singh Sandhu, called on the government to gazette the land of the Padang Merbok Gurdwara and provide allocation to rebuild the Gurdwara, which was built in 1890.

An estimated 2,000 people attended the open house.