

PM extends Vasakhi greetings

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‘Achievements of Sikhs in professional fields pride of nation’

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali today extended Vasakhi Day greetings to the Malaysian Sikh community.

Bernama reported that in his message, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was a multi-racial country where religion and custom did not pose any problems.

“We are able to observe together various different celebrations in the spirit of unity. This has made our people and country richer in culture and this has very much amazed foreigners who never realised that different races can live peacefully together,” he said.

People have deep mutual respect for the different cultures and customs of the various communities in the country, the Prime Minister said.

This understanding has moulded a Malaysian community with a high degree of tolerance which has contributed much to its success.

The Prime Minister said even though the majority of Malaysians were Muslim, people of other religions were free to practise their faith.

“In Malaysia, there is no obstruction in the way of anyone practising his own culture, let alone oppression of any race.

“We are grateful that the majority of our people are always moderate in whatever action they take. Malaysians do realise that any form of extremism will not bring any good,” Dr Mahathir said.

He said despite being a minority in Malaysia, the achievements of the Sikhs in various professional fields were the pride of the country.

This showed that in Malaysia, there were limitless opportunities for anyone to pursue success, provided he was willing to work hard.

“Today, Malaysian Sikhs are celebrating Vasakhi Day together with other races in peace and happiness. Vasakhi is an important celebration of the Sikhs, a day of purification and alms-giving for the good of humanity.”

Dr Mahathir hoped all Malaysians would join in the celebrations so that the Sikh community would not feel that they were a minority.

Meanwhile, the largest Sikh *gurdwara* (place of worship) in Southeast Asia, the Guru Nanak Darbar Tatt Khalsa Diwan, had its soft opening here.

The occasion saw the culmination of the three-day non-stop recitation of the Sikh holy scripture ***Sri Guru Granth Sahib***. A blood

donation drive was also held.

Vasakhi marks the day in 1699 when the 10th Sikh guru, Sri Guru Gobind Singh, formed the Khalsa Order that led to a renewed spirit of brotherhood. The men assumed the name “Singh” (lion) while women took the name “Kaur” (princess).

Vasakhi also marks the end of the harvest season in Punjab.

The new two-storey Sikh temple cost RM7 million and is situated at Jalan Raja Alang. Its design was inspired by the Golden Temple in India.

“We are grateful for the Government’s contribution of

RM200,000,” said Inder Singh Khosa, chairman of the *gurdwara* building fund committee.

An adjoining RM6 million building, Wisma Tatt Khalsa, houses a multi-purpose hall, accommodation for the needy, a Punjabi school and the only Punjabi newspaper in Southeast Asia.