

Minority Interests Will Not Be Sidelined, Says PM
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KUALA LUMPUR -- The interests of minority groups in the country will not be sidelined in the government's efforts to build a Malaysian society that is progressive and competitive, said Najib Tun Razak.

The prime minister said all ethnic groups no matter whether their numbers were big or small, including the Sikhs, needed to cooperate and become a partner of the government to ensure their interests continue to be protected.

"This (being a partner) is the best way for the Sikh community to work with the government towards realising the 1Malaysia vision. I believe Malaysia will become more successful and prosperous (by doing this)," he said when opening the 1Malaysia Vaisakhi celebration at Dataran Merdeka here on Monday.

Some 20,000 people, including foreign tourists, attended the celebration organised by the Malaysian Sikh Youth Organisation in conjunction with the Sikh new year (Vaisakhi).

Also present were the prime minister's wife Rosmah Mansor and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

Najib said as a result of the close cooperation between the government and the Sikh community, the government had also approved three plots of land for the building of gurdwaras (Sikh temples) in Kuala Lumpur.

The many Punjabi classes conducted in the country had also helped produce excellent results in the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) examination, he said.

"This is an example of a smart-partnership with the government. We can build a better future for all of us by working together.

"I am confident that the Sikh community will merge together hand in hand with the Malaysian government and with various ethnic groups so that together we will transform Malaysia to become a developed nation by 2020," he said.

Najib also paid tribute to the Sikh community for its sacrifices in defending the sovereignty of the country from foreign threats.

"The values of truthfulness, loyalty and hard work are hallmarks of the Sikh community. I thank them for their enormous contribution in the formation of this country. Thank you for your dedicated service in the armed forces and the Police," he said.

(Bernama)