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# Najib: Merdeka Day to remain the apex day

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Merdeka Day will always be the main celebration for the country despite the equally historic significance of Sept 16.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Sept 16 was an important day but the apex of Malaysia's celebration would still be Aug 31.

"This is the date when we achieved our independence. We have decided that we should only celebrate the day of independence, because it shows that the country is together as a nation."

Najib was commenting on the call by Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon for Sept 16 to be declared as Malaysia Day and be included as one of the country's celebrations.

On Sept 16, 1963, Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore came together to form Malaysia. The island republic however left the federation two years later.

MIC Youth chief S.A. Vigneswaran also agreed that though Sept 16 was a significant date, Merdeka should always take priority.

"Malaysia Day should not make Merdeka Day celebration less significant."

MCA Youth chief Datuk Liow Tiong Lai said celebrating Sept 16 as Malaysia Day would be good for national integration.

"But it doesn't have to be declared a public holiday, otherwise



Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin (centre) performing maghrib prayers before breaking fast in conjunction with the 74th Armed Forces Day at Masjid Kem Sungai Besi yesterday. He is flanked by Datuk Seri Najib Razak (second from left) and armed forces chief Gen Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Zainal. — Bernama picture

we'd be duplicating Aug 31. We can have forums, discussions, seminars or convoys around the country."

Gerakan Youth chief Datuk Mah Siew Keong, supporting his chief Dr Koh who is also acting Gerakan president, said Malaysia Day should be celebrated to increase the people's awareness of the significance of Sept 16.

"Many of our members from East Malaysia complained that

very few celebrate Malaysia Day, so Gerakan Youth is planning to make it an annual event."

Both Gerakan and MCA organised patriotic events during the weekend to celebrate the 44th anniversary of the formation of Malaysia.

Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang said it was necessary and important to observe the date because Malaysians should be aware of its significance.

"If it becomes a public holiday it will carry even more significance. I don't think that it will clash with the Merdeka celebrations because Sept 16 is a different celebration from Merdeka.

"It is a symbol of marginalisation for Sabah and Sarawak if the date is not given its proper place, and the people in West Malaysia will continue to be ignorant of the date's historical significance to Malaysia."