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## No orders to remove Christian symbols, says PM's special assistant

PETALING JAYA: The Prime Minister's special assistant has expressed regret over reports that a church was ordered to remove Christian symbols during a Christmas gathering last year.

Datuk Hardev Kaur, in a statement yesterday, denied that she had issued instructions to remove symbols from the entire venue or

barred the singing of Christmas carols and scripture recital during the event.

Hardev claimed she had only asked for the rostrum used by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to give a speech to be free of Christian symbols and artefacts.

"I did not give any directive not to sing carols at the function," she

said in a statement as reported in an online news portal.

Hardev stressed that her request for the removal of symbols from the rostrum was a suggestion on her own initiative and not that of the Prime Minister's.

"If my request has led to any misunderstanding, I express my heartfelt regret," she said.

The Council of Churches Malaysia Youth leader Daniel Chai has said hymns were sung and prayers performed during the event hosted by the Kuala Lumpur Archbishop Tan Sri Murphy Pakiam.

"The venue was the car park of the archbishop's official residence, to create a marquee garden party atmosphere ... an unlikely place to

find a cross," he said in a statement.

He urged for all quarters to stop making the matter a political issue.

Various quarters had criticised Najib and Murphy, alleging that the Prime Minister and his aides had instructed that all forms of Christian symbols be removed from the event held on Dec 25.