

**Sikh civil servants get Vaisakhi holiday**  
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**By JOSEPH KAOS Jr**

KUALA LUMPUR: Beginning next year, all government servants from the Sikh community will be given a day off on Vaisakhi Day.

Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak made this announcement at the Vaisakhi national open house event at Dataran Merdeka last night.

"Beginning next year, all Sikh civil servants will be allowed to take unrecorded leave' to celebrate Vaisakhi.

"This will allow them to fulfil their religious obligations on this important day of worship," the Prime Minister said to a thunderous round of applause from the crowd during the mass gathering of the Sikh community at Dataran Merdeka.

Vaisakhi festival celebrates the founding of the Sikh community known as the Khalsa on April 14 every year. Currently, Vaisakhi is not a public holiday in Malaysia.

Najib also announced a slate of allocations for the Sikh community totalling more than RM5mil, including building and repairing Sikh gurdwaras, organising youth development activities and enhancing the teaching of Punjabi language in schools.

"Even though the Sikh community is a minority in Malaysia, under the 1Malaysia philosophy, all Malaysians will be looked after and be given assistance.

"Our government will ensure all Malaysians, regardless of religious beliefs or culture, can achieve their maximum potential," he said.

Najib invited the Sikh community to work together with him based on the concept of *vishwaz*.

"Like how I used the term nambikei, which means trust and confidence' with the Tamil-speaking community, for the Sikhs I use the term vishwaz, which means confidence'," he added.

Najib also paid tribute to the more than 3,000 Sikhs who died fighting the Japanese during the Second World War.

He said the mass gathering of the Sikh community at the historical venue was an example how peaceful gatherings can be held. Nearly 10,000 people from the Sikh community and the public from all over the country attended the event.

"This historical space is not for certain groups of people to use and create trouble," he said in a reference to the recent Bersih 3.0 rally.

Among those who performed at last night's gathering were local artistes Monsoon and popular Bhangra duo Goldkartz.

Visitors were treated to a spread of Punjabi cuisine at the many stalls around Dataran Merdeka.

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