

Najib Announces Vaisakhi Gifts For Sikh Community
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 7 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced various 'gifts' for the Sikh community in the conjunction with the Vaisakhi Day celebration.

It entailed a total allocation of RM4 million to improve their quality of life and this included aid for religious, education and social matters.

What was more meaningful was that the prime minister also announced that Sikh civil servants could take unrecorded leave to enable them to discharge their religious duties for the celebration, which falls on April 14 each year.

And in recognition to the role played by their houses of worship, Najib also announced a financial aid of RM1.5 million for the Malaysian Gurdwara Council this year.

Through the financial aid, the prime minister said he hoped that all gurdwaras in the country would be properly maintained so that they could provide a conducive atmosphere for the Sikh community to organise their religious activities.

"Furthermore, I was made to understand that the aid will also be used to help gurdwaras which were affected by disasters like flood and fire," he said at the 1Malaysia Vaisakhi Open House 2012 at Dataran Merdeka here Monday night.

Apart from that, 18 other gurdwaras in need of aid and special attention will also be given allocations totalling 900,000, or RM50,000 each.

The gurdwaras are in Bayan Baru, Malim Nawar, Port Dickson, Tanah Rata, Kota Bharu, Petaling Tin, Kajang, Kuala Pilah, Changkat Tin, Kuala Kubu Baru, Pokok Assam, Bentong, Alor Setar, Tanjung Tualang and Kampung Pandan in the peninsula, and in Sandakan and Lahad Datu in Sabah as well as in Sibul, Sarawak.

Najib said the government would also give a total of RM300,000 or RM100,000 each, for the construction of three gurdwaras in Shah Alam, Subang Jaya and Georgetown.

An allocation of RM300,000 will also be given to Police Training Centre Gurdwara in Kuala Lumpur for the construction of the National Sikh Resource Centre while another RM200,000 will be allocated for the renovation of the Sikh crematorium in Jalan Loke Yew.

In a bid to improve access and quality of Punjabi language education, Najib said the government would give an additional allocation of RM500,000 for the production of relevant text books which would be given free of charge to the students.

The prime minister said the allocation was additional to the RM500,000 channelled by the Ministry of Education to the Khalsa Diwan Malaysia which began receiving the sum last year.

For the first time, the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Punjabi paper last year recorded a 100 per cent pass rate with 51 per cent of the students who sat for it scoring Grade A, while in the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) examination, the pass rate was 92 per cent with 38 per cent attaining Grade A.

For youth development, RM800,000 will be channelled to the Malaysian Sikh Naujawan Sabha Association to carry out its activities throughout the country.

"All these allocations and facilities show the commitment of the Barisan Nasional government in looking after the interests all communities in the country, including the Sikhs," said Najib, adding that it was also in appreciation of the community's contributions in preserving peace and harmony in the country since World War Two.

"The apt term in the Punjabi language is 'Vishwaz', which means trust. If we can reinforce Vishwaz, I am confident much more can be done for the Sikh community," he added.

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