

Singapore PM pays tribute to Sikh community, vows to support Sikh in many ways

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Singapore: Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has paid tribute to Singapore's Sikh community, saying the government will continue to support them in many ways. The Singaporean government has and will continue to support the Sikh community in many ways, he said yesterday at the Sikh community dinner.

The government has already recognised Punjabi as a second language in public schools and supported the formation of the Singapore Sikh Foundation through the Education Ministry to facilitate the teaching of Punjabi.

It has initiated the formation of Central Sikh Gurdwara Board to look after the community's needs, and granted the Sikh Welfare Council the Institution of Public Character status to support fund-raising.

"I am very glad to see that the demand for these activities is also growing. I know you have some space constraints. In line with our consistent support for the community, we will look positively at the Sikh community's growing needs to see how we can be helpful," Lee said, adding that Sikhs arrived here in 1881 to form the backbone of the police contingent.

He highlighted the Sikh tradition of serving food and providing shelter at the Gurdwaras, asking the community to continue to live out the values of self service and optimism embodied in their faith.

The Sikh community has also promoted religious harmony and multi-culturalism by participating in the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles as well as the Inter-Religious Organisation, Lee said.

Out of the seven Gurudwaras here, one at Silat Road on the fringe of the central business district serves free vegetarian food, averaging 1,000 meals on weekdays and 2,000 on weekends. Lee launched a milestone book published by the Young Sikh Association in conjunction with SG50 - the celebration of 50 years of Singapore's independence.

The book "Singapore at 50 - 50 Sikhs and Their Contributions" honours 50 notable Sikhs who have contributed to Singapore's development. These include the community of about 13,000 serving in various fields including academia, business, civil service, judiciary and politics.

The book highlights Sikhs contribution made in the post-1965 era, their role in the development and progress of the city state. Lee hopes the book will inspire the next generation of Sikhs to excel and serve Singapore.

In conjunction with the launch, the Singapore Sikh Education Foundation, which administers Punjabi as a second language in Singapore, also celebrated its 25th anniversary by honouring teachers and staff who have been with the organisation since its inception.

The Singaporean government has allowed Indian students to take their own mother tongue (Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi and Punjabi) as second language.

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