

Mahathir: Politicians realise the need to master Bahasa

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. Many politicians are now fluent in Bahasa Malaysia because they realise they will lose their support if they aren't, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said in the past non-Malays and even Malays were not very well-versed in the national language but since then there had been much development in the use of the language.

"There is no need to urge people to learn Bahasa Malaysia. If people realise that it was important enough, they would learn (on their own accord). Many people have mastered the language," he said when responding to questions from reporters after launching two compilation works by Usman Awang at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

Dr Mahathir said only a small group of politicians and some

"non-politicians" were using language as an issue for "cheap popularity."

"They now realise that for their political importance, they need Bahasa," he said.

He said the growth of Malay newspapers was proof of the importance of Bahasa Malaysia. "It's growth is because people want to read them."

Dr Mahathir said the Government had achieved its aspirations of wanting to expand the use of Bahasa Malaysia among non-Malays. He said he attended a speech competition at a Chinese school and was impressed by the standard of Bahasa Malaysia.

He said the Government was not preventing anyone from mastering their mother tongue. "But we say that they must also master the national language."

Commenting on objections of

certain quarters in using Bahasa Malaysia in Bibles, Dr Mahathir said: "We are not objecting to Bahasa Bibles. We are objecting to certain words (used in the Bibles) which can be confusing."

He said in Christianity, there was no such word as *Allah*. Instead, Christians used words such as *Jesus* and *Jehovah*.

"Islam came after Christianity. Now they want to use the word *Allah* which can confuse the Muslims. In fact, there are only about six words which should not be used in the Bible.

"That is all we are saying. Otherwise, they can use Bahasa. There may be people who are saying these things but the Government is not stopping (the use of Bahasa in Bibles)," Dr Mahathir said.