

Malaysians must read,

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Malaysians must read — and master other languages if necessary — to enrich their knowledge, the Prime Minister said tonight.

They should not be restricted by a narrow nationalistic spirit in the interest of gaining more knowledge. Learning a foreign language would not necessarily impair a person's nationalistic spirit if he did not neglect his own language.

"What is important is that the person becomes a knowledgeable citizen. Ignorant people are

not necessarily loyal citizens. By the same token, a person who can speak more than one language is not necessarily disloyal to the country," he said when launching the *Year of the Reader* over radio and television.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians must take advantage of the "golden opportunity" of the absence of restrictions on reading and acquiring knowledge from all types of books.

"Those that were once forbidden are now allowed and open to whosoever is interested."

Dr Mahathir hoped that Malaysians would regard books as their "life partners" because books are "the bridge of knowledge that links us to our surroundings and the world".

"Through books and reading we can mould a culture and tradition that can be the foundation of our strength," he said.

Dr Mahathir noted that a majority of students in the country only read their textbooks.

He said the situation was such that the Government had to stipulate a condition that only those who read at least three books other than their textbooks

says Mahathir

would qualify as trainee teachers.

"It is indeed sad as we have to give rewards to ensure that we read. In Malaysia, where there is a wealth of reading materials, it should be the case that those who read a lot qualify for certain posts," he said.

Noting that reading materials in the country are not easily available to the public, particularly in the rural areas, Dr Mahathir suggested that the National Book Development Council (MKBK) or the Book Publishers' Association produce a catalogue of new books

every year to make reading materials available to the public.

He said the catalogue should be distributed free or sold at an affordable price.

Dr Mahathir also spoke on the need for teachers to play an instrumental role in inculcating the reading habit in students.

He suggested that students who read a lot be commended as they were using books as a source of knowledge in their academic pursuits.

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DR M: PUBLISH MORE BOOKS IN PAPERBACK

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Dr Mahathir said teachers who read a lot would be respected by their students for their wealth of knowledge.

This would make easier the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student.

Dr Mahathir also suggested that newspapers reserve a special column for book reviews.

He said the people would benefit greatly from academic articles published by newspapers.

He also suggested that more books for general consumption be published in paperback so that a greater number of people could afford them.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would support efforts to translate books written by well-known foreign writers.