

ENGLISH IS VITAL: PM

23 JUN 1990

By Paul Gabriel

ARAU, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called on young Malaysians today to become more proficient in English to help the country gain the international community's respect.

He said English was becoming very vital in international relations and the business world and that Japanese and Indonesians now had a better

command of the language than Malaysians.

"Some of us must shed our fanatical attitude towards Bahasa Malaysia.

"We have to trade with Europeans and Americans more and more. We need to communicate effectively with them. If we can only speak Bahasa Malaysia, who is going to ever understand us?" he said, adding that the present generation was "losing grip of the language."

Dr Mahathir was speaking to students of Sekolah Menengah Dato' Sheikh Ahmad here on the first day of his visit to Perlis. He arrived on board an

RMAF helicopter.

The Prime Minister said the country needed diplomats who were good in English so that "we can communicate well with the outside world."

"I fear that if we do not do something (about the language), we may not be able to sign treaties (in English) with foreign countries," he said.

"We must know at least another language other than Bahasa Malaysia. It could even be Thai or German, but English is the world-acclaimed language so let us strive to have a command of it."

Dr Mahathir told the students that professionals like engineers, doctors and architects also needed to have a good understanding of English to succeed in their fields.

"One need not have to speak English the way an Englishman does. Just speak good, proper English and even the English will admire us," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said the translation of works from English to Bahasa Malaysia would fail if the authors had a poor understanding of English.

He urged teachers to pay special attention to students weak in English.