

# A DAY FOR ENGLISH

Pupils may have to converse in the language once a week

**P.M: Officials must be proficient in foreign languages**

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mastering a second language," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Bahasa Malaysia had developed into a more complete language in line with modern times because of the Government's open attitude towards other languages.

He said to achieve the Government's aim of turning Malaysia into a developed country by the year 2020, there was a need to have a strong understanding of all knowledge and technology.

"This can only be acquired by knowing foreign languages, especially English," he said.

He said Malaysia played a major role in international politics and its officials and businessmen must not only understand foreign languages but must also be proficient in them.

Dr Mahathir said it was correct (for Malaysians) to consider English a second language after Bahasa Malaysia.

"This policy is not based on sentiments or historical ties but because English is an international language. The historical factor is just coincidental," he added.

By Wong Chun Wai

**KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Schools may be required to get their pupils to communicate in English at least one day in a week to check the declining standard of the language among them.**

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the Government was studying whether a directive on this should be issued to state education departments.

The Prime Minister said the Negri Sembilan Education Department's move in compelling all pupils in the state to converse in English every Wednesday was commendable.

"It is a good idea which should be followed by other states.

"It is important that the language is

spoken regularly because if we merely read, we will not be able to have a good command of the language," he told reporters after opening the British Education 1991 exhibition here.

The Negri Sembilan move will take effect from April 3 and will involve 393 schools.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was concerned over the low standard of English among rural pupils.

He said these pupils had no opportunity to mix with those who spoke the language.

"We will not make English a compulsory subject in examinations until we are sure that these pupils have an equal chance of acquiring a good command of the language," he added.

On claims by certain groups that there is no need to learn English since the Japanese, who are advanced, do not use English, Dr Mahathir said the Japanese had now realised the importance of the language.

"The managers of (Japanese) companies are required to have a strong command of English to enable them to conduct their business overseas," he said.

The Prime Minister said it was not true that the Japanese did not use English because they needed the language to enrich their knowledge.

Earlier, when opening the exhibition, Dr Mahathir hoped the Government's attitude and policy towards foreign languages, especially English, were understood by the people.

"The people must pay serious attention towards

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