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Mahathir - language

(EMBARGO: For release after 10 pm, Sept 2)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 (Bernama) -- The true nationalist is not one who merely loves his language but one who loves his nation and wants it to progress, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

A nationalist would use any tool at his disposal to bring progress to his nation, he said.

+If the English Language is a tool to develop his nation, then he will earn English. Nevertheless, he will not lose his bearings, he will not forget his origins, he said on RTM's +Wawancara+ programme aired over TV1 tonight.

He said anyone who wanted to progress in this modern world should master at least two languages, one his mother tongue and the other a foreign language.

The Prime Minister said this when asked to comment on the feeling among certain people that the national language had no future in an industrialised Malaysia in the year 2020.-- more

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The government encouraged Malaysiansto master the English Language as it was understood by the majority of the people in the world, the Prime Minister said.

Even the Japanese who had progressed so much had to master the English Language, he added.

+We have to know English because certain words which we have to use in this modern world at times are not there in our own language and we have to borrow.

+If we hold negotiations and we only use our own language and don't understand other languages at all, we can never have any treaties,+ he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was confident that perhaps one day the Malay language would be learnt by other nations if Malaysia, were to become an industrialised nation and excelled in international trade.

But no one would want to learn Bahasa Malaysia if Malaysians were backward and had no civilization at all.

Nowadays, many people learned Japanese not because they were interested in the language but because Japan was a developed nation,

+It all depends on our attitude, we have to give priority to the national language as a language that gives us identity,+ he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia would be left behind if the people only wanted to know one language because much knowledge was not in the mother tongue,

A command in two languages would strengthen the thinking ability of an individual as he would be able to obtain knowledge from another source, he said.

Panel members in the +Wawancara+ programme were Senior Fellow of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Encik Rustam A. Sani, Editor-in-Chief of Kumpulan Utusan Melayu (M) Bhd, Encik Zainuddin Maidin, and Associate Professor Dr Ishak Shari of the Economics Faculty Of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. -- Bernama

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