

'English language useful tool for country'

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KLJALA LUMPUR, Mon. — The English language is a useful tool for the country to attain progress, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The Prime Minister said it was necessary, in this modern world, for anyone who wished to attain progress to be proficient in at least two languages — the mother tongue and a foreign language.

"We choose English because it is a language that is known worldwide. In fact, the Japanese, an advanced race, have to learn English. That is why we stress on English.

"But we do not say that we should not learn the national language. We also stress on it. But we don't stress on one language, say English, to a point that we forget the national language. That is not right," he said in a special RTM interview, *Bersama Perdana Menteri*.

Dr Mahathir was asked on the emphasis of English in relation to the Government's privatisation policy.

He said there was a need to learn English because some words used in this modern world were sometimes not found in the national language.

"And we have to borrow the words. Where do we borrow from? Surely from a language which we know, that is English," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it would be difficult to hold important negotiations and sign treaties without knowing English

"If we do not have anyone who understands English, who will be our translator?"

Dr Mahathir said a true nationalist was not one who only loves his language but one who also loves his race and wants to see it progress.

"And if there is a tool to enable his race to progress, he will use it. And if English is the tool, he will learn the language, without forgetting his roots."

On the special role of the national language, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the people to determine it.

"We give priority to areas that will not cause us to be left behind. If we stress that we must know only our language, then we will be left behind because much of the knowledge is not in our language."

"It all depends on our attitude. There is a need to instil an attitude to regard our national language as a language that gives us our identity," he said.

"If we learn English, and with it we gain progress and become a progressive race, our language will then be respected."

Dr Mahathir cited the fact that many people were learning the Japanese language not out of interest but because it belonged to a race that was advanced.

"One day, if the Malays, Malaysians, become so progressive that they control international trade, many people of other races will learn our language."

"But if we are left behind, who will learn our language?"