

# No need to curb use of English, says PM

By ZAZALI MUSA

KUALA LUMPUR: The use of English should not be curtailed in the process of promoting Bahasa Malaysia as the national language.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri ~~Dr. Mahathir Mohamad~~ said yesterday that the use of English was still important as the country needed to communicate with foreigners.

"Malaysians must not be emotional or fanatic in urging the Government to ban the use of English," he told reporters after attending Prophet Muhammad's birthday celebrations at Dataran Merdeka.

Some individuals had urged the Government to ban advertisements and broadcasts in English.

Dr Mahathir said: "They started with the advertisements and later, they will call for a ban on ministers giving speeches in English and even the English dailies in the country."

"Even in Indonesia, English is widely used. They (the Indonesian journalists) interviewed me in

English during the Non-Aligned Movement conference although they know I speak *Bahasa Indonesia*," he added.

He reminded Malaysians that the progress of Bahasa Malaysia was not the only measure of development as the country was lagging in other fields.

Malaysians, he added, must excel in every field and be willing to master other languages as this would give them advantages to compete with others.

"It doesn't mean that we will lose our spirit of nationalism if we converse in English.

"Mastering the English language is an asset for us, especially at international meetings and business discussions where English is widely-used," Dr Mahathir said.

"We still need English as a *lingua franca* to communicate with foreigners, especially to woo foreign investors to Malaysia.

What other language can we use to attract them, if not in English," the Prime Minister asked.