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MAHATHIR CLARIFIES LANGUAGE ISSUE

Mahathir - language

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed said efforts to promote Bahasa Melayu should be preceded by measures to develop the Malays into a successful and progressive race.

It cannot be done by preventing the use of the English Language as this would only prevent the Malays from acquiring knowledge necessary for progress.

He said a language used by farmers and fishermen would not become popular no matter how refined it was. One the other hand, many would want to learn and use the language associated with successful people.

Dr Mahathir said this in a letter published by the Utusan Malaysia today in reply to criticisms by the daily which was unhappy with his stance on the English language.

He said the Utusan had criticised him twice in its editorial and +Pojok+ column. It looked as if the paper was confused on its own stance.
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▼19/09/17-33MST

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Mahathir - language 2 Kuala Lumpur

Dr Mahathir said the paper wanted Bahasa Melayu to be used fully but at the same time it acknowledged the importance of English.

He said the Malays should not be too fanatic about language if they wanted to progress.

Dr Mahathir said, to him, in order to promote the language, efforts should first be made to develop the Malays into a successful race.

If the Malays were backward, they would be disappointed to the point that they would lose their pride for their own language.

He said the debate on the language issue started with a proposal to stop screening advertisements in English over TV and this was followed by others who wanted news in English, speeches in English and other things in English to stop.-- more

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Mahathir - language 3 (last) Kuala Lumpur

He said there might be a case for opposing advertisements in English, but if other things in English were also stopped it would have an adverse effect on proficiency in English.

The Prime Minister said English had become an international language, adding that even Japan, which was trying to promote wider use of the Japanese language, had to use English today.

He said it would be easier and faster to train Malaysians to use the English language than to translate the millions of books, journals and research reports into the national language.

Dr Mahathir said examination results showed that Malay students were very weak in English while the non-Malays did well despite having to study three languages.

He feared that in the future the Malays had to depend on the non-Malays (as interpreters) when dealing with foreigners.-- Bernama

▼19/09/17-45MST