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Mahathir-Bahasa

LEARNING ENGLISH, NO THREAT TO NATIONAL LANGUAGE

KUALA LUMPUR, June 1 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today mastering foreign languages especially English does not pose a threat to the national language which is the language of unity and solidarity of the Malaysian people.

The Government would continue with efforts to expand the use of the national language among all communities in the country, he said.

"Many non-Malay students are very fluent in Bahasa Malaysia and can write poems and features in the national language," he said.

The Prime Minister was pledging loyalty to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'far on the occasion of His Majesty's official birthday on behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia at Istana Negara here.

Her Majesty the Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Najihah was also present.

Other dignitaries present included the Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Cabinet Ministers and members of the diplomatic corps.

Dr Mahathir said the government was encouraging the people to master English so that they could enhance their knowlege in the field of science and technology.

Use of sophisticated science and technology required the people to have a good command of English, the Prime Minister said.

"Knowledge in science and technology was expanding at a rapid rate and we are short of scientists and cannot keep pace with translating all this knowledge for our students to learn," he said.

He said if Malaysians did not make earnest efforts to master the English Language, the country's progress would be affected.

Several Eastern nations which were more developed than Malaysia had made it a condition for staff of giant companies particularly those involved in information technology and multimedia to learn English, the Prime Minister said.

"Their mastering of the English Language has in no way affected their own language or identity," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the progress and wider use of Bahasa Malaysia depended on the progress of the people who spoke the language particularly those who used it as their mother tongue and if they were backward their language also would decline.

In view of this, efforts to bring progress to the Malays were of utmost importance and towards this end they would have to master foreign languages particularly English.

The government would therefore expand the use of English among the people, he said.

"This effort should be made part of the struggle to ensure the continued sovereignty of the national language," he said, adding: "Our slogan now is Maju Bangsa, Majulah Bahasa."

The Prime Minister was grateful that the country was peaceful and the people of various races living in harmony without any conflict which could affect national stability and solidarity.

"The understanding and tolerance among the races that existed during the general election last year still prevailed," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that previously certain companies were owned by only one particular race but the firms were now no longer owned along

racial lines.

Many companies were jointly owned by all races and their directors and employees were also from all races.

There was genuine participation in the operation of the companies and the Ali Baba style no longer existed, Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister noted that Bumiputera performance and abilities had enhanced both from the professional and financial aspects.

Non-Bumiputera owned companies had been bought over by Bumiputeras and were being well managed by them, he said.

Dr Mahathir regretted that many Bumiputeras had sold their stakes in companies to non-Bumiputeras for quick gains.

Bumiputera participation in economic activities had increased rapidly due to the guidance and financial assistance from the government and now many Bumiputeras were active and had invested in Europe, the United States and South America.

This trend was expected to continue and efforts to eradicate the identification of race with particular employment would be successful, God willing.

The Prime Minister was confident that the annual national economic growth would surpass seven per cent during the Seventh Malaysia Plan period.

The plan would concentrate on capital-intensive and high technology industries producing Malaysian brand goods for export to the world market, he said. -- BERNAMA

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