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PRIVATE SECTOR MANAGERMENTS SHOULD PERPETUATE A GREATER LOVE FOR BAHASA

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has its development agenda neatly packaged in the Vision 2020 concept. Our nation is striving for progress through science and technology oriented development with the ultimate objective of turning Malaysia into a fully industrialised nation.

Said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he first unveiled Vision 2020: "Come the year 2020, Malaysia can become a nation which is united, with its people possessing self-confidence, supported by firm moral values and ethics, living in a society which is democratic, liberal as well as compromising, kind and just, progressive and prosperous, and has full control over its economy which is competitive, dynamic, and sustainable."

Much has been said about Vision 2020. In the context of this article, only one aspect will be discussed, that is, the role and position of Bahasa Melayu.

If viewed within the context of the Federal Constitution, the position and function of Bahasa Melayu are clearly stated there. Bahasa Melayu is the national language, the official language and the medium of communication among its citizens.

Generally speaking, Bahasa Melayu has successfully assumed these roles. Bahasa Melayu has succeeded in becoming Malaysia's official language and it is used as the medium of instruction at all learning institutions (lower as well as higher). Malaysians use Bahasa Melayu as a common communication tool and even the legal circles and the judiciary are encouraging wider use of the national language. In the private sector, Bahasa Melayu is used now and then.

Considering the extensive use of Bahasa Melayu in the public service, this article analyses the use of the national language in the private sector, particularly in the field of administration and management.

Can Bahasa Melayu function well in the industrial sector? This question is an easy one as the answer is an emphatic "Yes". But if the question is rephrased as follows "Can all parties involved in the industrial sector use Bahasa Melayu in matters pertaining to administration and management?", it may not be that simple to answer. This is because many people in the private sector are trained overseas and are not exposed to the progresses made by the national language. These people are also move conversant with the English Language and are not very fluent in Bahasa Melayu. They, in fact, even dream in English.

It's clear that Bahasa Melayu has the capacity to be used as a medium of communication in the private sector. Although, it has already made some inroads into the private sector, the extent of its use has yet to achieve a satisfactory level.

A CASE STUDY ON HICOM HOLDINGS BHD

A general survey was conducted on Hicom Holdings Bhd in an effort to determine the role of Bahasa Melayu in the development and transfer of technology. This study is not complete yet and the points mentioned in this article reflect our preliminary findings.

Basically, the company does its best to use Bahasa Melayu in its management and administrative affairs. Its circulars, memoranda, letters and minutes of meeting are written in Bahasa Melayu. Its annual report is bilingual and so is its newsletter, Berita Hicom.

Due to the presence of foreigners as well as officers who were educated overseas, there is also extensive usage of English. Discussions, especially those related to technical aspects, are conducted in English and Bahasa Melayu, with a tendency for English to be used more frequently. But Bahasa Melayu is the medium used when the management communicates with the lower ranking staff (who are educated locally). The middle and lower ranking staff also talk to each other in Bahasa Melayu.

Manuals are retained in their original language (English) except when they are required to be used by employees who are not conversant in English.

Since the company has direct dealing with other nations (external trade), many of its employees, including secretaries and clerks, feel that it is pertinent for them to be fluent in English. There are often requests for English classes to be held but there has not been a single request for Bahasa Melayu lessons.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the preliminary findings on the case study of Hicom Holdings, There are:

- * The extent of the use of Bahasa Melayu is dependent on the attitude of the top management. Senior personnel, like board members who are mainly educated in English, prefer to use English at meetings and while giving speeches. As a matter of fact, they are responsible for dictating the language policy at their workplace; and

- * It is clear that efforts are being made to use Bahasa Melayu for daily administrative and management purposes. But the attitude towards language is liberal. English is used in many situations, especially by those who are not fluent in Bahasa Melayu. Our government's policy of stressing on English is not helping to enhance the use of Bahasa Melayu.

STEPPING UP THE USE OF BAHASA MELAYU IN INDUSTRIAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

It is a fact that Bahasa Melayu will not be made redundant in the industrial sector. This is because a good portion of workers speak in Bahasa Melayu everyday and it is also the medium used when they hold discussions on matters pertaining to their work. These workers are mainly those who were educated locally and are more at home with the national language. They understand English but in their daily lives, Bahasa Melayu is close to their hearts.

However, these workers speak in simple Bahasa Melayu and are not well-versed with sophisticated terminology related to science and technology. Therefore, efforts must be made to find ways to make Bahasa Melayu the medium of communication for information technology. Two parties have been identified to make this a reality.

First, the leadership. We need administrators who do not only have a good command of English but also possess high aspirations for Bahasa Melayu. They can use English at the appropriate place and time but they must ensure that Bahasa Melayu is the main medium of communication among their staff, particularly in terms of transfer of technology.

Secondly, the attitude of workers at all levels. While understanding

that English is important in certain situations, we must mould citizens who will use the national language with pride. The attitude towards English should be in relation to the utility characteristics of the language. We study English because we are aware of its tole and the benefits we can reap by mastering it. Our approach should be a pragmatic one.

On the other hand, our attitude towards Bahasa Melayu should be linked to our love for our country and the glory of possessing our very own language. Such an attitude will give rise to a desire to respect the national language at all times: This, is turn, will lead to a reduction in the usage of English.

Such a situation can only be achieved through a rational education system which is aimed at building up a race firmly adhering to its traditional roots. While English is an important international language, our national language is the genuine symbol of our identity.

In the context of industrial administration and management, many situations can arise in which we can manifest our pride towards our identity. For this to happen, everybody has to make an effort, from the management to the workers. The attitude of the leadership plays an effort, from the management to the workers. The attitude of the leadership plays an influential role. They are the ones who can give the right signals and indirectly chart out the progressive use of Bahasa Melayu in the private sector. -- Bernama