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Dr M: Development of language linked to progress of Malays

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The development of the Malay language is dependent on the progress of the Malays, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said a language would not be highly regarded if the society of its native speakers was neither progressive nor respected by others.

"Likewise, if the race is progressive ... capable in many fields, then many people will learn the language to gain knowledge from the users of the language.

"As such, the development of the race is very important.

"We cannot demand the development of the Malay language without the development of the Malays," said Dr Mahathir at the Malam Sanjungan Budi dinner held by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia tonight.

The function was held to commemorate UKM's 30th anniversary. Also present were UKM Chancellor the Yang Di-Pertuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Ja'afar Tuanku Abdul Rahman and the Tuanku Ampuan Tuanku Najihah, vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Anuwar Ali and pro-chancellor Tan Sri Abdullah Mohd Salleh.

Dr Mahathir said UKM's role in propagating Bahasa Malaysia through its use as a medium of instruction was undeniable.

He said by producing more than 70,000 graduates in all fields since its inception, UKM had helped to increase the usage of Bahasa Malaysia in society by professionals.

Dr Mahathir also said it was important for the Malays to strive not only for success in the acquisition and mastery of knowledge and in trade, "but as brave people in facing challenges and overcoming obstacles".

As an example, he cited the accomplishments of mariner Datuk Azhar Mansor who became the first Malaysian to sail solo around the world early last year.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped that in commemorating UKM's 30th anniversary, Malaysians would also reflect on the past when opportunities to further one's studies at tertiary level were scarce.

"At one time, getting the opportunity to study in university was considered a privilege, so if we can re-create this spirit of considering the opportunity a uniqueness, then all our efforts to bring development to the people will achieve success."

At the same function, Dr Mahathir later launched a book titled Citra Cemerlang 30 Tahun UKM.

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