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Step up the emphasis on English language

CPL

THE message from the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is very clear, that is we must improve our standard of English in order to keep up with the rest of the world. This in no way is unnationalistic or giving Bahasa Malaysia less importance.

I was educated in a English-medium school where Bahasa Malaysia was being taught as a subject and all we ever wanted to do was to pass this subject in the Malaysia Certificate of Education (MCE) examination as it was compulsory.

While at work, I was fortunate enough to work in an environment that uses both Bahasa Malaysia and English and that helped me to improve my Bahasa Malaysia. The present situation is now the reverse with English as a subject.

I would suggest that the education system be restructured to have more subjects taught in English so that students would be "forced" to use more English.

This can start at Standard One with the subjects like Science and Mathematics. The students would then have a strong foundation in English to prepare them for technical subjects at tertiary level.

The current system puts a good majority of students from national-type primary schools at a disadvantage. They are taught in Mandarin or Tamil with Bahasa Malaysia as a language subject.

When they reach the secondary-level, they have to switch to Bahasa Malaysia. This results in many national-type school students being weak in Bahasa Malaysia. The system could be changed to have equal emphasis on Bahasa Malaysia, English and Mandarin/Tamil.

This is going to be very difficult to be accepted but let's put aside all political and cultural differences. Look at the advantage of the students being strong in at least three languages. I am sure the national-type schools will not lose their character by doing this.