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Language is a store of knowledge, says Sanusi

Saiful Azhar Abdullah; Annie Freeda Cruz; P. Sharmini

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - While universities are in the business of acquiring and disseminating knowledge, the command, ability and knowledge of any language is of utmost importance, said International Islamic University Malaysia president Tan Sri Sanusi Junid today.

"Just as money is a storage of values, language is a store of knowledge. Unless the required knowledge is available in a language we know, we are required to know the language in which that knowledge is available," he said.

"While scholars were busy translating books of knowledge into the language we know thus enriching that language, it is only when the speed of translation was faster than the growth of knowledge that we can be satisfied that, in the distant future, there would be enough knowledge in the language we understand.

"As there is no obstacle or obstruction against anybody learning another language which is rich in knowledge, our choice in isolating ourselves from the language with more knowledge can be regarded as voluntary imprisonment. Our language is then our prison," he said.

Sanusi said it was in this light that the university was planning to teach more languages other than Arabic, English and Malay.

"Greater access to knowledge will make us freer from our language prison," he said at the opening of the IIUM and the second general conference of the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

In thanking Dr Mahathir for choosing the university to be the host of the International Institute for Muslim Unity, Sanusi said: "The unity of the Muslims in this country, and the support of all races from all religions, have resulted in the establishment of this university."

He expressed hope towards building a united Ummah so that future Muslims can live in a better and safer world.

Sanusi also thanked the delegates from 148 universities in the Muslim world and observers from all Muslim countries for choosing IIUM as the host university and Malaysia as the host country to be the venue for this second general conference.