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We must also master, value and love Bahasa Malaysia as it makes us who we are

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LATELY there have been many responses on the importance of mastering English.

It all began when our charismatic Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad emphasised how crucial it was to have at least a reasonable proficiency in English in order for us to move forward in this world as English was the global language.

Evidently, the ability to communicate competently in English is definitely a necessary tool to interconnect with the rest of the world.

When the Government started the initiative to instil awareness among Malaysians on the importance of English, those who already are proficient in English were probably smiling because they are equipped with the skills or even with an accent.

Having a good command of English doesn't mean one has the ability to talk fluently. Language in its very nature is a medium of communication to impart message and information.

There is no point of talking in such a manner or using jargons, when the speaker cannot get the message across.

A person who has a good command of English should be a person who manages to express his ideas through simple sentences and that others are able to understand the message.

Looking at our charismatic leaders, like our PM and our Deputy PM, they both speak simple and plain Malaysian-style English.

Their competency in English certainly has helped them to be known all over the world. But also, they are not afraid to use Bahasa Malaysia.

During any Malay interview, whether on television, radio or even public appearances, they always manage to express their thoughts and aspiration in complete Bahasa Malaysia sentences.

An important feature about language is that it is not only crucial as a medium of communication, but more importantly as an essential part of our culture.

It is a badge that we can wear proudly as it represents our heritage, customs and ancestry.

Having a good command of English alone is not enough to make us a good Malaysian.

A good Malaysian is a person who loves and is also able to speak Bahasa Malaysia well.

But a reasonable proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia alone is also not enough to make us a good Malaysian. We should be able to converse and express ideas fluently in Bahasa Malaysia, if we are to become a true Malaysian.

Those who have a very good grasp of the English language must be happy because they know what the word 'endurance' means. They probably also know what 'counterfeit' and 'poignant' mean.

But they should ask themselves; "Do I know the meaning of the words sabak and cindai?"

If we cannot even speak fluently or understand our own language, how are we, let alone the outsiders, suppose to value and appreciate our heritage, customs and beliefs?

We have to master English because it is an essential tool in communicating with the outside world. But we must also master Bahasa Malaysia because it makes us who we are.

People all over are learning French, Mandarin and Spanish because the native speakers value and love the language. One day, other people will be eager to learn our language, but only if we start to appreciate and have pride in our language now. Value and love Bahasa Malaysia please!