

# Gapena: Malays must master other languages

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The importance of the English Language cannot be denied, but more emphasis should be given to ensuring Malays master other languages as well to ensure they are not left behind.

Federation of Malaysian Writers' Association of Malaysia (Gapena) first secretary Prof Zainal Abidin Borhan said while the current debate on English proficiency was understandable, a country need not necessarily place English as the language of technology.

"Look at the European countries like Germany and Sweden which produce cars like Volkswagen and Volvo. They did not achieve this by mastering the English language," he said at the *Intellectual Discourse on the importance of the English Language* at the Youth Academy yesterday.

He said even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had acknowledged that China and South Korea would be forces to reckon with, making other languages such as Mandarin important.

"We are also glad that there will be no re-introduction of English medium schools but are worried about the implication of teaching Science and Mathematics in English. This is an abrupt change after years of trying to teach the subjects in Malay."

Other speakers were former Kedah State Executive Councillor Datuk Paduka Abdul Rahman Ibrahim, Education Ministry political secretary Ariffin Mohd Nor and Umno Youth education bureau chairman Dr Adham Baba.

Adham said the question of Malays being left behind was more to do with the strength of will rather than strength of language.

"With the country striving for a K-economy, we have no choice but to get as much knowledge as possible to compete with other countries. There is no quota on knowledge."