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Mahathir-English

USE OF ENGLISH SHOULD NOT BE POLITICISED, SAYS PM

IPOH, Aug 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the issue of the use of English in the teaching of mathematics and science should not be politicised as it is not an element of politics but relates to a language for the acquisition of knowledge.

He also said that using English would not change a person's culture or identity as the main objective was to improve the achievement level of the people.

"I learnt English in school when I was very young but I did not become an Englishman. You will not become an Englishman just because you learn English," he said at a luncheon attended by Perak Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders in conjunction with his visit to the state, at the Menteri Besar's residence here.

Dr Mahathir said that BN leaders should also refrain from turning it into a political issue because the government only wants to ensure that Malaysians were knowledgeable, learned and highly articulate at international forums.

"I don't believe that people who only learn English as a subject can be articulate in science, mathematics and technology at international functions," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that an increasing number of developed countries was now placing emphasis on English like Germany and China which had been calling on its thousands of people to learn the language.

The prime minister also said that the sensitive attitude towards the other races and the spirit of sacrifice should be further promoted as they had proven to contribute to peace and unity in the country.

He said that they had also succeeded in ensuring cooperation between the various races under the Alliance and later the BN, turning Malaysia into a model nation.

"The Malays were prepared to drop the name Malay Federation and the Jawi script for the sake of cooperation with the other races," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the readiness to sacrifice, to set aside personal interest and be sensitive to the other races was the reason that the BN had become a moderate party which had succeeded in developing the country.

Dr Mahathir said that even though the BN had been moderate, the party had frequently been threatened by racial extremists, be they Malays, Chinese or Indians, through demands that could jeopardise race relations.

"If we were to meet them (their demands), we will not have been able to cooperate with the other races. If rejected, the Malays may just join PAS...what will happen if Umno were to be defeated, will the MCA or MIC be able to cooperate with PAS," he said.

The prime minister said that the BN's strength had brought about a government which was stable and succeeded in overcoming the various crisis including the 1997-98 economic slowdown.

He said that Perak's rapid economic development including the revived Proton City project in Tanjung Malim was the result of efforts of the state and federal governments.

Dr Mahathir's visit to the Perak today, which kicked off with his visit to the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) in Tanjung Malim, was his first to the state since he announced in June his intention to step down next year.

Also present was Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali.

-- BERNAMA
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