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Mahathir-English

DR M STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH FOR NATION'S DEVELOPMENT

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysia should continue its quest for rapid development by going all out to gain knowledge through the use of English, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said for better or for worse, Malaysia had decided on the need to study English more seriously as a second language and, additionally, to gain rapid access to new scientific and mathematical knowledge, these subjects should be taught in English from the primary school onwards.

In his first local speaking engagement here, he said the language nationalists must be unhappy over this new policy as it appeared to undermine the national language as the cementing and definitive language of Malaysia.

"No doubt to a certain extent it will. But the choice is between depriving ourselves of new knowledge and consequently slowing down the development of Malaysia, or striving for rapid development by aggressively acquiring knowledge through the use of English," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this when closing the three-day International Conference on Language and Nationhood organised by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)'s School of Language Studies and Linguistics.

He said the Arab and European civilisations gained from the willingness to study the knowledge available in other languages.

Dr Mahathir also said that if Malay was to be better known, then the Malay-speaking people must become advanced in their material development and to do this, they must be willing to learn English, the current language of knowledge.

If they confined themselves completely to Malay, he said, it was unlikely that they would develop and build a greater Malay civilisation.

"It is therefore not unnationalistic to learn English, as long as Malay as the national language is not neglected," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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