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Mahathir-English

MASTER ENGLISH BUT RETAIN MOTHER TONGUE, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has asked Malaysians to master English as it is a necessary tool to acquire knowledge.

But he said they should also keep their mother tongues to preserve their identities.

"We must master English to learn more," he said in response to a question at the First East Asia Congress here today. A participant asked about the kind of education concept that East Asian countries should adopt.

Citing the Malaysian education system as an example, Dr Mahathir said the government realised the importance of English language, hence the drastic move to use English in the teaching of Mathematics and Science in schools.

Dr Mahathir said: "It is simply impossible for us to translate all the works into our language. To translate a technical paper requires three qualifications. The person must be well versed in English and in Malay and he must also be conversant with the subject...we just don't have these."

He also said that Malaysia did not have the luxury to waste valuable human resources to do translations when their energy was much needed elsewhere.

At the same time the government realised the importance of Mathematics and Science subjects in the development of the country, he said.

"On education we should be very pragmatic," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that in today's world it was important for people to master at least two languages, including their mother tongue, as it would help them to conduct themselves, especially at the international level.

The Prime Minister had delivered the keynote address before taking questions from participants.

About 1,500 people from Asean countries, Japan, China and South Korea are attending the three-day congress.

-- BERNAMA

NM AHH YBY