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Carrying weight of their titles when abroad

By Fudzail

DUBAI is a major destination for business and tourism in the Middle East. It is not surprising, therefore, that our ministers, Members of Parliament, politicians and other dignitaries are frequent visitors.

And where such personages go, titles follow and confusion reigns.

Recently, during a regional tourism exposition, one of our deputy ministers was in town as a member of the country's delegation. It was unmistakably "Malaysian" when the "Yang Berhormat" was referred to as "Y.B. Datuk" in newspapers, as if they were initials preceding a family name. Luckily for him, the name was similar to some expatriate names and appeared okay at first glance.

Around then, our former Prime Minister was in Abu Dhabi, key speaker at a conference. It was not "Malaysian" at all when he was addressed as plain "Dr Mahathir" and not as "Tun Dr Mahathir". He did not appear to be any lesser for want of a title, though.

Coincidentally, a former state assemblywoman came for a function. A friend who greeted her was so annoyed when she insisted she be called, "Datin Paduka". She felt everybody should know that she was a VVIP.

A few years ago, I was involved in preparing an MoU between a Dubai government agency, where I worked, and a Malaysian government agency. The PR lady called from Cyberjaya to remind me not to forget to put "Tan Sri" on every page that mentioned the boss' name. So Malaysian, I told her: "Here, who cares about the title anyway!"

Most of our politicians want to carry the weight of their titles around everywhere they go. For the sake of our country's image, I would suggest they leave their titles at home. We cannot "Malaysianise" the rest of the world with these titles that sound strange to other people. It is just not important at all.

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