

PM's Dept admits to gaffes in Wen's welcome message

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The Prime Minister's Department has admitted that its badly translated billboard set up to welcome Chinese premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Putrajaya, was the result of using Google's online translator. In a written reply to Serdang MP Teo Nie Ching (left), the department admitted that the Chinese translation of the welcome message was inaccurate.

"An internal investigation found that the personnel involved had good intentions and wanted to include a welcome message in Chinese.

"However, due to time constraints, the translation was made through Google Translate, without referring to any members of the administration or department staff who are well-versed in Chinese.

"The senior officer from the relevant department has written a report to the prime minister through the chief secretary of the government and apologised," read the reply.

The embarrassing episode happened on April 28. Wen was inspecting the guard of honour at the Dataran Putra in front of the Prime Minister's Department complex when he came across the billboard in question.

Najib apologised to Wen

The huge billboard, which served as a backdrop for the event, featured a welcoming message in Malay, with a Chinese translation littered with syntax and grammatical errors.

This caused an uproar online as netizens quickly criticised the federal government.

According to the written reply, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak had personally apologised to Wen.

"The apology was accepted by the guest. This incident does not mar the good relationship between the two countries," it said.

A report on the matter was tabled during the cabinet meeting subsequent to the event and it was decided that to avoid such incidents from recurring, language experts would be employed to avoid translation errors.

The department added that this was the first time that such a billboard had been erected for such a function and that this was a new initiative by the department's officers.

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