

## **Ex-DAP MP schools PM on how to promote BM**

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Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim should be presenting positive instead of negative narratives with regard to the use of Bahasa Malaysia, said former DAP lawmaker Ong Kian Ming.

According to him, this would encourage and incentivise others to use BM because it is in their interest to reach the wider BM-speaking community, not because it is being forced on them.

“Maybe it is time for PMX’s (Anwar) team at PMO (the Prime Minister’s Office) to show him some of these positive examples on social media so that he can present these narratives instead,” he added in a statement.

Yesterday, Anwar had lashed out at certain “elite groups” for their obsession with the English language, which has led them to underestimate the importance of the national language.

“I do not advocate reducing the importance of English but I also reject any phobia towards our own language.

“I want to remind those overly fixated on the English language that while they may have grown up in London, they live in Malaysia and must represent the hopes and aspirations of the Malaysian people as a whole,” he said.

Ong, who expressed “strong support” for the national language, said he believes that Anwar didn’t mean to call out the many Malaysians who do not necessarily see themselves as part of the “elite group who grew up in London” but who nonetheless use English, at least to a certain extent, in their workplace regularly.

“This would include the many thousands who work for multinational companies in Malaysia and the many publicly listed companies, especially those which have international customers and operations, academics in public and private universities who teach in English and the support staff who deal with international students, civil servants who have to engage with their foreign counterparts in English, tour guides and taxi drivers who have customers whom they communicate with in English, just to name a few.

“By calling out those who speak and use English at the ‘elite’ level, many other ‘non-elites’ may feel that they are also being unfairly targeted by Anwar’s remarks,” he added.

**English speakers not looking down on BM**

The former Bangi MP said those using English in different settings in Malaysia may be doing so for other reasons, not because they are undermining the use of BM or because they look down on the use of BM in official settings.

He added that most annual general meetings (AGMs) of public-listed companies are done in English, partly because many of the financial reports are presented in English and because of the presence of foreign shareholders.

Similarly, he noted that many academic proceedings and international conferences are done in English because of the presence of foreign speakers and participants.

“This is not to say that there may be some Malaysians who are not so comfortable or fluent in communicating in BM. There are many reasons for this, and it would require another context to explain fully. But rather than focusing on the negative, wouldn’t it be better for PMX to propose some new and creative examples to demonstrate the importance of the usage of BM?” he added.

Ong then cited numerous examples of those who have become popular on social media because of their command of the BM language.

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