

YOURSAY | National language important, but so is English proficiency

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Yoursay

YOURSAY | 'Malaysia is a top tourist destination because English is widely spoken.'

LimePanther5220: What is Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim raving and raging about?

Who is the elite group that grew up in London and is obsessed with the English language?

If any, they would most likely be Malays financed under government scholarships to study in the UK. (That's my conclusion, because how many non-Malays have the chance to grow up in London?)

This group (if any) would also most likely be small. Do they then have any power to sideline Bahasa Malaysia in this country?

Nowadays, Bahasa Malaysia is a compulsory subject in schools. Can we still say

that it is being sidelined?

If students are not competent in Bahasa Malaysia, it is due to other reasons. Previously, many students were also not competent in English when it was the main medium of instruction. Was English being sidelined then?

Anwar also said that the various ethnic groups in the country should set aside their disputes over language and strengthen their commitment to empowering Bahasa Malaysia.

When this is achieved, it will be easier for us to focus on improving English, Chinese, Tamil, and other languages.

The above begs the question of why we can't focus on the various languages simultaneously.

If Singapore can do it, why can't we?

Are Malaysians any less than Singaporeans? If we focus on only one language at a time, opportunities will pass us by.

Anwar really needs to clear his thoughts.

Anon25 @ LimePanther5220: When it comes to a language, people become very excited.

They talk about the long history of a language's use. So what? You can keep the history.

It is important in a sovereign country to have a national language.

I am sorry to say Anwar also gets carried away by chauvinistic views when the issue of Bahasa Malaysia is raised.

English is a useful language we should preserve and keep. Bahasa Malaysia is an easy language to learn.

The government must promote its use tactfully. More people speak Bahasa Malaysia fluently today than in 1957.

Can we become proficient in Bahasa Malaysia while preserving our proficiency in English? Of course, we can.

Former DAP lawmaker Ong Kian Ming has skilfully explained why we should. Singapore is a Chinese-majority country.

Yet they made English their main official language.

Even a Chinese language university had to switch from Chinese to English.

Because they did that, Singapore has prospered.

Today, Singaporeans are bilingual and even trilingual.

IndigoCat9464: Despite being a non-Malay, I speak Bahasa Malaysia fluently.

How did I master the language?

Well, my primary school education started in 1976, and I finished secondary school in 1986. Everything was kind of muhibah.

I went to a national school, and every language was a priority and important to pass.

I used to mingle more with my Malay friends. We were like brothers. Everyone visited each other during the festive seasons, be it Hari Raya, Deepavali, or Chinese New Year.

There weren't any halal issues because we respected each other's religious beliefs.

We were very careful not to hurt or offend others. So, all these integrations promoted the use of Bahasa Malaysia.

I didn't see Bahasa Malaysia as a second language, despite speaking in English and my mother tongue at home.

My suggestion to Anwar is to promote Bahasa Malaysia as a language we can enjoy mastering instead of criticising those who don't speak it well.

Yes, English is important, but promote Bahasa Malaysia or other locally spoken languages. Learning is fun.

Cogito Ergo Sum: The most foolish directive from Anwar to government departments is not to entertain letters written in English.

This is his way of winning the support of civil servants because it means that no action will be taken on such complaints, lowering the workload of overpaid staff.

Anwar is under the delusion that he will win the support of the Malays by championing the use of Bahasa Malaysia over other languages.

He should note that Bahasa Malaysia has been the language used at all institutions of education from primary to tertiary level for the last 30 years.

A pragmatic leader will know how to balance the use of national language and the need to be technologically advanced by embracing the lingua franca of the sciences.

As it is, our graduates are incapable of being on par with their regional counterparts. We seem to take pride that they cannot speak English! This is tragic and stupid.

Open mind: What Ong said is true. Who are the elite groups that are referenced by the prime minister as advocating the English language and ignoring Bahasa Malaysia?

English is commonly used in many companies today. The prime minister himself answers in English during interviews with foreign media.

Is he undermining the use of English? Sarawak supports the use of English in their official correspondence.

Is this also undermining Bahasa Malaysia?

Methink: Malaysians who converse in English are “elites”?! That is a very narrow and prejudiced view.

This should include rich people, those who holiday in Western countries, wear three-piece suits in our hot climate, read widely in English and eat Western foods frequently.

You are part of this group too, Anwar.

Blue Lights: The prime minister should change his advisers in the Prime Minister's Office. For some time now, whatever he says in public has not been worthy of his status.

Look at how former Najib Abdul Razak used former BN deputy director of strategic communications Eric See-To as his alter ego.

Similarly, Anwar can make use of the talents of people like Ong to get the oomph and wow factor.

Platypus: Anwar proudly announced foreign direct investments from big tech giants such as Google, Oracle, and Microsoft.

The big question is, what level of English proficiency is required by them to make our young people employable?

Will this turn into another racial issue when certain ethnic groups excel

(dominate) in this sector?

Willy Wonka: Most Malaysians in the private sector need competence in English and use it regularly at work.

But almost all Malaysians are fairly competent in Bahasa Malaysia and can communicate effectively when the need arises.

Bahasa Malaysia is one of the world's easiest languages to master.

Fair Play: Proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia is an asset and an advantage. The same goes for proficiency in English.

Malaysia is a top tourist destination because English is widely spoken. Even a fool knows that.

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