

**A language for all
Malaysiakini.com
Jun 4, 2007**

The government's decision to revert to the term 'Bahasa Malaysia' in reference to the national language - from 'Bahasa Melayu' - is to make it a language for all Malaysians.

Explaining the move, Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said the cabinet's decision made last month is meant to avoid polemics and to reflect that the language belongs to all ethnic groups.

According to a Bernama report, Najib said: "We know Malay is the national language, but we want it to be the language of all Malaysians, regardless of heritage or race. We regard Bahasa Malaysia as belonging to all of us, that is the rationale," he told reporters after opening the Third World Tourism Conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

Information Minister Zainuddin Maidin was quoted in English-language daily The Star today as saying that the cabinet unanimously decided last month to use the term 'Bahasa Malaysia' again for the national language.

According to the minister, the decision was made to help inculcate a sense of ownership for all citizens irrespective of race.

He said the local media, ministries, local varsities and various government agencies have been informed of the decision and told to comply with the change.

Zainuddin said the term 'Bahasa Malaysia' was introduced by first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman after the country's independence to inculcate a Malaysian identity.

"It was generally accepted and no one asked for a change until Anwar Ibrahim became the education minister (in 1986)," he was quoted as saying.

"He dropped the term 'Bahasa Malaysia' for 'Bahasa Melayu' and it has remained that way. But now, we feel we should go back to the original term."

'Unmentionable' subject?

Meanwhile Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang, while welcoming the change, questioned the manner the announcement of the change was made.

"Today, only the Star and Sin Chew Daily reported this April decision of the Cabinet to restore the term Bahasa Malaysia as the official term for the national language," he said in a statement.

"There was not a single Bahasa Malaysia medium which reported this important Cabinet decision," he added.

"Why was the subject treated as if it is an 'unmentionable' subject for two months, and when it was made public, done in a most selective manner when it should be properly announced to all language media, whether printed or electronic?" he asked.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/68150>