

Dr M extols the need to master English
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Malaysians have an extremely important role of mastering English to acquire knowledge at a faster pace to ensure there is no 're-colonisation' of the country, said Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Without a good command of English, the former prime minister noted, the people would not acquire knowledge quickly.

He said this would, in turn, open doors to those knowledgeable to dominate and influence them, either directly or indirectly.

"English is the language of the Knowledge Age. Countries which do not master English will not only be left behind but risk being colonised, either directly or indirectly.

"Without knowledge, countries will be oppressed and even invaded," Mahathir told reporters after delivering his keynote address entitled, 'The Leadership and Policy Components for the Knowledge Society: A Proposed Best Practice for Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) member countries at the 17th Islamic World Academy of Sciences (IAS) conference.

The conference was opened by the Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah today.

The four-day conference, which began today, is jointly organised by IAS, Universiti Industri Selangor (Unisel) and International Islamic Academy of Life Sciences and Biotechnology.

Mahathir said that only by mastering English, could the people in this country acquire knowledge at a faster pace so as not to be left behind by development.

He said, the people would not lose their identity by seeking knowledge in English.

"English is not only for English people but (it is) a universal language. I am not an Englishman but I speak English," he said.

Gov't wrong to reverse policy

Meanwhile, Mahathir said the current leadership was "ignoring success" by abolishing the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) and reverting to Bahasa Malaysia.

"I don't think the government understands the importance of English as a language of knowledge when they decided to switch from English to Malay (in teaching Science and Mathematics)," he said.

Recently, Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said the government had decided to reverse the PPSMI policy and revert to Bahasa Malaysia in national schools, and Chinese and Tamil in vernacular schools from 2012.

The PPSMI policy was implemented in phases, beginning with Year One, Form One and Lower Six students in 2003, under Mahathir's administration.

Earlier, when delivering his keynote address, Mahathir said knowledge was expanding rapidly, especially in science, and books and writings on this subject were in English.

He said that possibilities are there to override past beliefs in the field of science, which cannot be done in geography and history.

"Knowledge in science is not static unlike geography and history where facts are structured and limited.

"In science, we can always go back and question the scientific principles and decide whether they are right or not," he said, adding new discoveries are coming out in torrents in English.

- *Bernama*

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