

Bahasa Malaysia 'for unity'

NST- 5/6/2007.

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KUALA LUMPUR: The national language is now to be known as Bahasa Malaysia, the term designated to it after Merdeka.

In explaining the change from Bahasa Melayu, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the reversion was intended to promote togetherness, unity and integration among Malaysians.

He said the government did not want to see the cabinet's decision being turned into polemics.

"Our view regarding the national language is that it is owned by everyone, regardless of race and ethnicity.

"Although the national language is Malay, we want to make it a language for all. That is the rationale (for the change)."

Najib was referring to a news report quoting Information Minister Datuk Seri Zainuddin Maidin as saying that the cabinet had decided on the change in April to inculcate a

sense of belonging for all citizens in the country.

With immediate effect, ministries, public universities and local institutions of higher learning have been directed to use the term Bahasa Malaysia in letters, notices and documents.

Bahasa Malaysia was introduced by the country's first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj after Independence to foster a Malaysian identity.

It was changed to Bahasa Melayu by the then education minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in 1986.

On tourism, Najib said Malaysia was on track to reach its target of attracting 20.1 million tourist arrivals, with expected tourism revenue of RM40.5 billion.

As of May 10, 8.9 million tourists had visited the country. On average, two million tourists were received a month.

"We are determined to achieve the target for Visit Malaysia Year. So far, so good. Barring any unforeseen devel-



Turkish delegate Ligdem Namli (right) having fun making a bracelet out of beads at the World Tourism Conference exhibition held at the Shangri-La Hotel yesterday while Rose Belare, from the Ulu tribe in Sarawak, guides her.

opments, we should be on track to achieve it," he said after opening the 3rd World Tourism Conference yesterday.

Themed "Tourism Success Stories and Shooting Stars", the three-day conference boasts 826 participants from 72 countries.

It will discuss four topics — sustainable growth, marketing, product development and partnership between private and public sectors.

In his speech, Najib said Asean countries must learn from each other and leverage on their experiences to enhance each country's tourism sector.

"Countries with greater success must be ready to assist those still developing their industry. Of course, it is a competitive business.

"But that's not to say we cannot work together to enhance regional growth and

promote global tourism as a whole, which will be beneficial to all."

He said Asean countries must be able to work together to identify trends, understand consumer demands and share collective experiences to implement suitable action plans.

"We do not want negative competition, the sector is big enough for all to share. We can gain more if we work together and not against each other."