

B. Malaysia 'language of all races'

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Najib: Move aimed at boosting unity

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government's decision to use Bahasa Malaysia to refer to the national language is because it is the language of all races, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the move should not be turned into a polemic.

"We all know that the national language is Bahasa Melayu but we want the language to belong to all Malaysians regardless of race, ethnic group and so on.

"So, by referring to the language as Bahasa Malaysia, it means that the language belongs to us all," he told reporters after the opening ceremony of the World Tourism Conference 2007 here yesterday.

He was asked to comment on *The Star's* front-page report yesterday on the Cabinet's decision to revert to referring to Malaysia's national language as Bahasa Malaysia rather than Bahasa Melayu.

Najib said the move was aimed at promoting unity, integration, togetherness and usage of the language among Malaysians.

Concurring with Najib, Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said: "There was a long debate on this but the Government has made a decision."

He was speaking to reporters after opening a New Zealand education symposium in Putrajaya.

Wanita MCA chief Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen described the move as an "appropriate adjustment."

»It means that the language belongs to us all«

DATUK SERI NAJIB TUN RAZAK

"The world now knows of Malaysia. So it is only right that the language is known as Bahasa Malaysia.

"There is no change in the substance of things," she said.

Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang welcomed the move but asked why the Cabinet decision had been made in such a "sheepish, surreptitious and selective" manner.

National Union of the Teaching Profession secretary-general Lok Yim Pheng said the union has been receiving positive response from teachers on the decision.

"It may seem like a small thing but it can improve racial integration," she said.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Malay World and Civilisation Institute senior fellow Prof Datuk Dr Shamsul Amri Baharuddin said the decision added another symbol for the people of the country to identify themselves as Malaysians.