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# Mastering English not 'unpatriotic'

> Mahathir says it is the language of knowledge and is crucial for a nation to succeed



Mahathir delivers his lecture on the 'Impact of Technology on the Future of Higher Education' yesterday.

BERNAMAPIX

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday reiterated his stand that English is the language of knowledge and that mastering it will not make one unpatriotic.

"We should all be nationalistic but if you want your country to be successful, then you cannot be nationalistic about your own language (Bahasa Malaysia).

"Learning English won't make you unpatriotic; it is the language of knowledge. Our language alone is not good enough if you want to make the nation successful.

"Are you going to speak in your national language when you trade with the Japanese?" asked Mahathir while delivering a public lecture on 'Impact of Technology on the Future of Higher Education' yesterday. It was organised by the Open University Malaysia (OUM).

He emphasised that the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English is vital, adding that these two subjects, unlike others, were constantly being changed and updated with research and new developments.

"We can translate books but it's not about that. There are thousands of academic papers published; how are we going to translate it all? Who is going to dedicate his life to translate all the papers?" he asked, drawing

laughter from the 500-strong crowd.

During the question and answer session after his lecture, Mahathir was asked if a social class in the education system existed as some parents sent their children to private, international or vernacular schools, with national schools as the last option due to unhappiness over the government's flip flop decision on the medium for science and mathematics.

Mahathir agreed but he also insinuated that those who are disgruntled with the decision had the power to change things.

"You can change the government if you want to, or if you don't want to change the government, you can change the person. But telling me, a former prime minister is not going to help. You must tell the (present) prime minister," he said.

Meanwhile, when asked if the government should repeal the University and University Colleges Act to allow student involvement in politics, Mahathir disagreed.

"People pay a lot of money for the students to go to universities to study. They shouldn't be involved in politics. There will be time enough for politics later on in life," he said.

Last month, Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said students should be allowed to take part in politics, following the government's move to allow graduate teachers to engage in politics.