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'Bahasa Malaysia can be global lingua franca'

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PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak aspires for Bahasa Malaysia to be one of the global *lingua franca* as well as the main language in the Southeast Asian region by 2050.

He said as Malaysia progresses to be among the top 20 nations, the National Transformation 2050 (TN50) would ensure the national language would not be sidelined.

With more than 300 million speakers, Bahasa Malaysia could become a significant international language in the next 30 years, he said yesterday at the Malay

Language Oratory Competition for the 2017 Prime Minister's Trophy at Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

Najib said Bahasa Malaysia played a vital role in building national unity, adding that the government would continue efforts to make the language more inclusive to enhance its usage.

Among efforts to consolidate the status of Bahasa Malaysia was the move to make it a compulsory subject for international students.

However, such efforts should not be seen as an attempt to weaken the position of English or

other languages in the country.

Najib urged the public to be wary of using "degraded" Bahasa Malaysia in their daily lives as it could taint the status of the language.

He said usage of such degraded language was apparent on social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

"This social media language will erode the position of Bahasa Malaysia, especially its mastery and correct usage.

"I hope we are not inclined to use the language based on social media trends," he added.