

Dr M to speak at Oxford Union

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Invitation to address prestigious body will 'boost local English use'

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PETALING JAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's invitation to address the prestigious Oxford Union will provide a boost to local efforts to promote the use of the English Language, besides upholding the freedom of speech, says the English Speaking Union of Malaysia.

Its chairman Tunku Dara Tunku Naquiah Tuanku Ja'afar said every Malaysian should be proud of the invite, the first ever to a Malaysian and Asean leader.

"Our Prime Minister is a great orator with much humour, so it is a great opportunity for him to put us in a better limelight, again," she said when contacted yesterday.

Tunku Dara said with the Oxford Union described as the "last bastion

of free speech in the Western world", it was apt that Dr Mahathir was invited to speak there tomorrow.

"Dr Mahathir loves to debate, so we should be proud that he has accepted. I hope it will also encourage Malaysians to speak English more often," she added.

Oxford Union is one of Britain's oldest student unions and a world-renowned debating society with history stretching back to 1823.

Oxford Cambridge Alumni member Datuk Dr M. Shanmughalingam said the invite to Dr Mahathir would help put Malaysia and Asean's stamp on the famous institution, as the PM joins the ranks of previous speakers such as Albert Einstein, Sir Winston Churchill, Mother Teresa, Henry Kissinger, Stephen Hawkins and Malcolm X.



A great honour: Tunku Dara and Radhakrishnan.

"He said it would be a momentous moment for Malaysia, Asean and the Third World," he added.

Dr Shanmughalingam, who authored the local bestseller *Marriage and Mutton Curry*, said the timing of Dr Mahathir's address was timely with Universiti Malaya's higher listing in the *Times Higher*

Education (THE) Emerging Economies University Ranking 2019 Top 20.

"I hope that after this historic event, Malaysians and our universities will strengthen greatly their links with institutions of academic excellence like Oxford and Harvard," he added.

International Islamic University Malaysia's World Debate and Oratory Centre (Iwon) director Siti Aliza Alias, also an Oxford alumni, said the recognition given to Dr Mahathir handed Malaysians the opportunity to show the world that they were charting the future as a united and peaceful nation.

"I hope our students will learn from and be inspired by Dr Mahathir's courage of never being afraid to speak his mind at the world stage, even if it ruffles feathers and goes contrary to popular

opinion," she said.

She said the invitation was a recognition of the commitment to free speech in New Malaysia under Dr Mahathir's Pakatan Harapan administration.

Inner Temple Alumni of Malaysia founding member and former secretary S. Radhakrishnan said the invitation to Dr Mahathir was proof that Malaysia now had a higher standing in the world.

"It is indeed a great honour for Malaysia and its people. I had lunch with a visiting senior official of the Inner Temple London here on Tuesday, and he spoke of the positive changes in Malaysia, in terms of a free media and free speech.

"He described these as significant developments," added Radhakrishnan, who is a legal consultant with Shearn Delamore & Co.