

PM to propose Malay as a second language in Asean



PRIME Minister (PM) Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob plans to hold discussions with other Asean leaders to propose the use of the Malay language as the second language in the region.

He noted there are Malay speakers in other Asean countries, which should be a driver to push for the language to be used regionally.

Apart from Malaysia, the PM said the language is already used in several Asean countries such as Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines and Cambodia.

During his recent visit to Cambodia, Ismail Sabri said he was told that there are 800,000 Malay-Champs who use the language and while in Vietnam, there are 160,000 Malays speakers also from the Malay-Cham ancestry.

"This means that there are people who can speak in Malay in the whole of Asean. There is no reason why we cannot make Malay as one of the official languages in the region.



Ismail Sabri says the govt will also amend the DBP Act 1959 in a bid to uphold the Malay language, thus making it an educational language

"We will discuss the matter with other Asean leaders, mainly those in countries that already use Malay, and after that I will discuss with other leaders in the region who have Malay speakers in their countries," he said in the Dewan Negara yesterday in response to a supplementary question from Senator Datuk Seri Zurainah Musa who asked about the government's ini-

atives to expand the usage of the language to the international level.

Meanwhile, the PM also responded to a question from Senator Datuk Isa Ab Hamid on the government's efforts to uphold Malay in the country's diplomatic and foreign relations.

Ismail Sabri said there are only four out of 10 Asean countries that are using English in their official

events at the international level, while six other countries are using their native languages for official events, requiring translation.

He also said he had requested for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prepare speeches as well as necessary documents in Malay for his reference when he does official visits abroad.

"As an initial step in upholding

the language, I have used Malay during my official visits to Indonesia, Brunei, Cambodia and Thailand recently. I also used Malay during my recent trip to Vietnam two days ago.

"We do not need to feel shy or awkward to use Malay at the international stage. Efforts to uphold the language is also in line with one of the main components in the Malaysia's Foreign Policy Framework, which was launched by the government on Dec 7, 2021, which is Cultural Diplomacy that includes elements to put Malay on the global map," he said in the Upper House yesterday.

The PM added that the government will also amend Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) Act 1959 in a bid to uphold the Malay language, thus making it an educational language.

The amendment will enable DBP to take action against any violation of the Malay language at all levels including district, state and federal.

"I find that the existing DBP Act does not give any power to government agencies to implement enforcement against language-related offences," he added.