

PM: Govt to discuss requirements for Tamil language classes

KUALA LUMPUR: The government will discuss how current requirements set for Tamil to be taught as an additional language in secondary schools can be relaxed.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the current condition required a minimum of 15 students for a Tamil language class to be held.

He said he would discuss the matter with Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek.

"I will alert and suggest the Education Ministry make the necessary adjustments — if we set the condition (number) to 10, we should allow nine or 11 students also.

"(This is) just to allow students to master an additional language. In schools around the world, like the United States and China, people encourage students to master two or more languages, which means in this case for Indian students, to master Bahasa Melayu, English and Tamil.

"I think it's an advantage for Malaysia to have students who master more languages," said Anwar at the 11th Tamil Research Conference in Universiti Malaya

yesterday.

Present were co-chairman of the conference, V. Sivakumar, who is also human resources minister, and MIC deputy president Datuk Seri M. Saravanan.

Anwar also announced that the government would channel RM5 million to the Indian community to boost Tamil language in the country.

"Through this, RM1 million will be allocated for the conference, RM2 million for the Tamil study and research department of Universiti Malaya and another RM2 million for teaching and learning materials for schools under the ministry."

He said the allocation did not necessarily mean that the government was sidelining Bahasa Melayu, only that it was advocating students to master more than two languages.

"In this age, mastery of language is important. However, people will twist and say that we are sidelining Bahasa Melayu.

"This is what divides us. We have also approved hundred millions of ringgit in allocation for the development of Bahasa Melayu."



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the launch of the 11th Tamil Research Conference in Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, yesterday. With him are Human Resources Minister V. Sivakumar (third from left) and MIC deputy president Datuk Seri M. Saravanan (right). PIC BY ASYRAF HAMZAH