

Don't underestimate BM, elites told

English is important but don't forsake national language, says Anwar

IPOH: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has criticised certain elite groups for their obsession with the English language, which has led them to underestimate the importance of Bahasa Malaysia, the country's national language.

He said the belief that success and intelligence can only be achieved through the mastery of English is misguided.

"I do not advocate reducing the importance of English, but I also reject any phobia towards our own language.

"I want to remind those overly fixated on the English language that while they may have grown up in London, they live in Malaysia and must represent the hopes and aspirations of the Malaysian people as a whole," he

said during the launch of National Language Month 2024 at the Ipoh Convention Centre here yesterday.

Also present were Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka director-general Dr Hazami Jahari.

National Laureates Datuk Zurinah Hassan and Datuk Rahman Shaari were also in attendance, Bernama reported.

Anwar added that the various ethnic groups in the country should set aside their disputes over language and strengthen their commitment to empower Bahasa Malaysia.

"When this is achieved, it will be easier for us to focus on

enhancing English, Chinese, Tamil and other languages," he said.

He added that a nation's economic empowerment must go hand in hand with the empowerment of its culture and civilisation, including language, arts and literature.

He said the Madani government under his leadership will remain dedicated to elevating Bahasa Malaysia while ensuring other languages are not marginalised.

"It has been claimed that the Madani government marginalises the Malay language. Where exactly is this marginalisation? We are prioritising the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and education. Compared to previous years, it is evident that more funding and support are now being allocated,"

he said.

During the ceremony, Anwar presented the Language Icon Award to three recipients: folk singers Roslan Madun and Hazwan Haziq Rosebi as well as TV host Ahmad Fedtri Yahya.

He also presented the Scientific Work Prize to two recipients: Prof Shamsul Bahari Abdul Razak for his book *Kelulutologi: Merungkai Misteri Kelulut Alam dan Kehidupan Manusia* and Dr Nafishah Mat Rabi for her work *Rawatan Alternatif untuk Kanak-Kanak Autistik*.

Separately, Anwar refuted claims by some Opposition leaders that the government would change the status of Islam as the country's official religion.

"What kind of delirium is this?"

"We have never discussed

changing the principles related to language, Islam, the special rights of the Malays and bumiputra or the position of the Rulers during my tenure as the Prime Minister," he said.

Anwar also said he was open to criticism but it should not be based on lies and slander.

"You can criticise our economic policies, the ringgit or a prime minister who may not be wise on many issues.

"But it cannot be treacherous, lies and slander that can cause fear among the people, impacting the country.

"Don't incite and sow hatred among the people," he said.

Anwar also said that the country is peaceful with a stable political landscape, ensuring efficiency in planning for the future.