

Elite groups slammed for undermining *Bahasa Melayu*

> Belief that success, intelligence can only be achieved through mastery of English is misguided, says Anwar

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

He said the belief that success and intelligence can only be achieved through 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 at the launch of the National Language Month 2024 at the Ipoh Convention Centre yesterday.

Anwar added that the various ethnic groups in the country should set aside their disputes over language and strengthen their

commitment to empowering *Bahasa Melayu*.

"When this is achieved, it will be easier for us to focus on enhancing English, Chinese, Tamil and other languages."

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

Anwar said the *Madani* government under his leadership would remain dedicated to elevating *Bahasa Melayu* 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 *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* and education. Compared with previous years, it is evident that more funding and support are now being allocated."

At the event, Anwar presented the Language Icon Award to folk singers Roslan Madun and Hazwan Haziq Rosebi as well as TV host Ahmad Fedtri Yahya.

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

All recipients received a cash prize and a certificate of appreciation.

Present at the event 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 present.

Meanwhile, Anwar said the government has never discussed about changing the status of Islam as the religion of the federation, Bernama reported.

He said the accusations made by the Opposition regarding the issue are deemed a distortion of facts and could incite hatred.

"We have never discussed changing the principles related to language, Islam, the special rights of Malays and Bumiputera or the position of the (Malay) Rulers.

"None of these topics has ever been discussed or raised during my tenure as prime minister."