

**Government Will Defend Bahasa Melayu as Main Language of Nation - Najib  
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PUTRAJAYA, March 25 (Bernama) -- The government will defend Bahasa Melayu as the main language of the nation even though English and other languages are allowed in the country's mainstream education system, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said the government would also not waver in continuing to make Bahasa Melayu the official medium of education in the country at all levels.

He noted that efforts to empower Bahasa Melayu to continue to expand needed good and detailed planning and would take a long time.

"This effort also requires our whole-hearted commitment, especially from those tasked with the responsibility," he said when officiating the 2016 Prime Minister's Cup International Bahasa Melayu Speech Competition (PABM) at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC) here tonight.

As such, Najib called on the Higher Education Ministry and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka to step up cooperation with overseas institutes in the effort to spread knowledge on Malay civilisation and promote Bahasa Melayu.

Najib said the government had established a number of Chairs in Malay Studies in universities abroad as a collaborative effort to study other approaches to expand the use of Bahasa Melayu in foreign countries.

He said efforts to internationalise Bahasa Melayu as a world language required integrated and inclusive initiatives.

As such, Najib stressed that Bahasa Melayu practitioners must provide full cooperation to the government and its agencies to empower Bahasa Melayu in the international community.

In the era of information and communications technology, Najib said: "We should make full use of all the room and opportunities available to jointly expand Bahasa Melayu to non-native speakers so that Bahasa Melayu is viewed as dominant and relevant for all time."

According to him, the Malay language has been adopted as one of 10 major languages of the world, with more than 300 million speakers and ranks fifth as the most widely spoken language in the world.

Regarding the competition, Najib said it was not only a competition, but rather it is a solid foundation to make Bahasa Melayu a world class language so that it continues to flourish with the times.

"The International Bahasa Melayu Speech Competition is not merely looking for someone who can make the most eloquent speech, nor aiming to profit by winning.

"However, it is one of the best platforms for us to introduce the essence of the language and the Malay

race itself," he said.

Muhammad Haziq Jamaludin was announced the winner of the 2016 International Bahasa Melayu Speech Competition for the Malay World category, while student Abdalla Hassan Gharib, from Tanzania and currently studying at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) was the winner for the international student category.

Hatsune Yanai, from Japan, emerged the winner in the international category.

Besides the Prime Minister's Trophy, the winners also received RM20,000, accompanying gifts and certificate each.

A total of 47 students majoring in Malay Language in institutions of higher learning around the world took part in the competition.

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