

Bring back English-medium schools, says Umno Youth leader

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Umno Youth deputy chief Khairul Azwan says Malaysians afraid to speak English out of embarrassment, should mix it with their own language first.

SUBANG JAYA: Umno Youth deputy chief Khairul Azwan Harun says he supports the call for English-medium public schools to make a return.

Speaking at the National Transformation 2050 (TN50) dialogue last night, he said he was not sure how it could be done but there needed to be some change.

“Personally, I support the initiative to have more English-medium schools in the country. But, I don’t know if the current policy will allow for this. There needs to be some policy adjustments,” Khairul said.

He was joined at the TN50 dialogue by representatives from several NGOs supporting education causes.

Khairul, who is an Umno Senator, also highlighted that some Malaysians are reluctant to speak in English because they are afraid of embarrassing themselves.

He said that the main problem is that Malaysians are “shy” to speak in English.

To fix this, he suggested they first start off by putting in a mix of English with their native language in conversations because it would be better to start somewhere, than not try at all.

“The problem with Malaysians is that we are very shy. We don’t want be laughed at. We are afraid of committing mistakes.

“There is nothing wrong in encouraging the younger generation to use English together with our native tongue,” he said during the forum here.

Project Fearless’ Nurul Ashiqin said that during her three year experience as a lecturer, her students were reluctant to come forward with their ideas as they were not proficient in English.

“Sometimes I have to force it out of them, and they have great ideas,” she said, adding that not all Europeans speak good English, but they try anyway, which is something Malaysians should emulate.

MyReaders programme coordinator Charis Ding, gave a different perspective for the growth of English stressing that the communities ought to be empowered to help improve English in their areas.

“The only way to do this is to work with communities, empower children through communities by providing sustainable and structured reading programmes. It takes a community to raise a child,” said Charis, whose view was shared by other speakers as well.

Khairul said he will be presenting the issues highlighted by speakers and audience at the forum to Education Minister Mahdzir Khalid.

“He told me to listen, to take down notes and for it to be conveyed to him,” he said.

Other speakers from the NGOs present agreed that education should not be politicised and that pop culture based programmes on social media would entice Malaysians to want to learn English.

Teach for Malaysia co-founder and TN50 ambassador Dzameer Dzulkipli was the moderator for the forum.

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