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Language without knowledge not enough, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR: The use of English to teach science and maths is more than just about fluency in Bahasa Malaysia, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"I am not interested in just acquiring fluency in Malay. If we have all the Malay people able to speak Malay very well, but have no knowledge of science and maths, then I think we are not going to be a very good nation" said Mahathir.

"I do not want the people to

speak a language but have no knowledge," he told newsmen after delivering the keynote speech at English and Asia 2008 - a conference on English and linguistics organised by the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

He said that while there were scientific papers published in Bahasa Malaysia the majority of research was being published in English.

"Admittedly there is some knowledge coming to us in our own language but I notice that the amount of new knowledge coming out of researchers today is fast and furious, and there is no time for us to translate them.

"The only way we can get to them is through the language in which the papers were published," said Mahathir, adding that he does not want to see Malaysians "unable to cope with the new sciences coming out".

Mahathir said he had not spoken on the issue until recently as he did not wish to be

seen 'as a pseudo English nationalist'.

Asked what action he would be taking with regard to the issue, Mahathir said that he was not in a position to make decisions on this matter, "unless you re-elect me as prime minister."

Meanwhile, when asked as to when he would release his list of Umno members involved in money politics, as he had earlier announced, Mahathir said he was still in the process of gathering evidence.

"I have to be sure before I put up the list," said Mahathir adding that he will only release the list if the Umno disciplinary board does not take any action.

"We give the disciplinary board two weeks, I hope they will act within two weeks," said Mahathir, who did not deny that money politics was in existence when he headed Umno.

"There was corruption during my time and I have always admitted that there was corruption but not on the scale that you are seeing now," said Mahathir.

