

Dr M: Teaching subjects in English helps Malays

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday defended his decision as prime minister to teach Mathematics and Science in English in schools.

"We have to master the learning of these subjects in English first. Right now, all the research in science and technology is written in English."

He said that learning the subjects in English would benefit the Malays and make them more competitive.

He was speaking at a dialogue entitled "Malay Dilemma" organised by the Federation of National Writers Associations here.

"It would take us a long time to translate all the research into Malay, and it would require someone who is good in English, Malay and the subjects to do the translation. And if we waited for this process to happen, we would be left behind."

He said the policy was not meant to put the Malay language in the back seat.

He cited his own example, where having studied in English up to university level, he was still able to express himself in Malay.

Like the long-ago Arabs who learnt Greek and Hindi to acquire knowledge, Dr Mahathir said the Malays had to work hard in order to prosper.

"Most Malays do not know how to reinvest their wealth. They get licences to op-

erate businesses, contracts and approved permits and they sell them for short-term gain.

"We must be frank and ask ourselves, if the Chinese in this country went back to China, which is doing well now, would the Malays be able to take over and run their businesses?"

He said the notion of Malay supremacy must not be taken out of context.

"A Malay driver cannot ask his employer to call him *tuan* because he is a Malay. We must gain knowledge and put ourselves in a position to be regarded as superior.

"We must contribute to the economic progress and wealth of the country, only then will people regard us highly."

Dr Mahathir also said the Malays were not articulate enough to defend their status in the country.

"People say that we are not the original inhabitants of this land. The Malays get angry with these statements and tell them not to question the issue instead of explaining the matter based on historical facts.

"The truth is, this whole area was known as the Malay Archipelago before the British and Dutch came and divided Tanah Melayu and Indonesia.

"So, whether we lived in Java or Malacca, we are still Malays and therefore, not immigrants in Malaysia."