

Elevating Malay as a medium for unity

By [Audrey Dermawan](#) - November 6, 2023 @ 7:01am



Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin greeting students at Universiti Sains Malaysia in George Town on Saturday. PIX BY MIKAIL ONG

GEORGE TOWN: Malaysia wants to elevate the Malay language, positioning it as a superior medium that serves as a catalyst for unifying its diverse ethnic groups in a harmonious social environment.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin said Malaysia wanted the global community to appreciate the Malay language and its uniqueness.

"The treasure and heritage of the Malay language are huge and great. However, we do not want it to stop there.

"We want to elevate the Malay language as a superior medium, that is, a language of knowledge, a language that serves as a platform to discuss big and exciting ideas, a language that inspires the young people to create masterpieces and a language that invites the wise to dig for knowledge.

"Most importantly, it should serve as a language that unites nations and ethnic groups in a harmonious social environment." He said this at the closing of the Pidato Antarabangsa Bahasa Melayu (PABM) Piala Perdana Menteri 2023 finals at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) here on Saturday.

Since its inaugural edition in 2007, PABM has become one of the ministry's flagship programmes, dedicated to promoting the Malay language on a global scale.

In light of this, Khaled said, the ministry continuously took steps to make the Malay language an integral part of the higher education agenda.

He said one such initiative was the Malay Language Empowerment Action Plan at institutions of higher learning.

Under this action plan, the ministry agrees with the recommendation that general university subjects compulsory for international students can be replaced with the Malay Communications Language course, according to its suitability.

He said the ministry's efforts also included the recognition of language figures, the establishment of Malay language chairs and fostering close cooperation with institutions offering Malay language-related studies worldwide.

"We strive for all this because we are confident that the Malay language has its own strengths, and we want more people to delve into the language as an important and promising field.

"In elevating the status of the Malay language, the ministry has several targets. First, we want to make the Malay language an attractive field. This means that the Malay language must be part of the featured discipline in building and strengthening international relations based on knowledge.

"Second, the Malay language must become a universal language in highlighting a good value system, especially in translating the national agenda beyond racial and national boundaries. Malaysia Madani, for example, is a national ethos that is based on a good value system.

"This value system should form the basis and image of a cultured nation with full pride. The Malay language should be a catalyst for triggering and driving the restoration of the good system in the community."

He added that it should not only be confined to domestic borders, but also across international borders.

Khaled said the ministry welcomed the prime minister's firm stance on conducting official government correspondence in the Malay language.

"The Malay language is the soul of the nation with a special position, and not just a filler of the constitution.

"So let us work together to ensure that the Malay language is developed and uplifted with robust strategies. This should be a collective national mission with a global outlook."

PABM programme director Shamil Shazwan said the goal of the the event was to celebrate the Malay language as the national language and introduce elements of culture and civilisation in the language to the world community.

PABM saw the participation of 80 contestants from 23 countries across three categories. After three screening phases, only nine competed in the finals — three for each category.

"The increased participation shows that the Malay language has crossed the global ranks."

Shamil thanked Khaled for entrusting USM with the responsibility of hosting PABM 2023.

"We also want to thank the ministry for introducing the Students Empowerment Agenda.

"PABM is a reflection of our perseverance and determination in implementing this agenda.

"On this occasion, I want to express my gratitude for entrusting me with the role of PABM 2023 programme director. I learnt a lot about programme management and operations.

"It is my hope that PABM will continue. May the Malay language continue to develop alongside globalisation."