

MELTA NATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

THE ROLE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN NATION BUILDING

22 APRIL 2003

SHERATON SUBANG TOWERS AND HOTEL,
SUBANG JAYA SELANGOR

RESOLUTIONS

Presented to Dato' Mahadzir Mohd. Khir
Parliamentary Secretary, Malaysian Ministry of Education
at the
7th MELTA Biennial International Conference
English Language Education: Transcending Boundaries
Subang Jaya, Selangor
18-20 May 2003

The Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA) held a National Colloquium entitled *The Role of the English Language in Nation Building* on 22 April 2003 at the Sheraton Subang Hotel and Towers, Subang Jaya Selangor. Various educationists comprising lecturers from public and private universities and colleges, school principals, teachers, writers, foreign delegates, members of the press, members of professional organizations, industry representatives, publishers, NGOs, administrators and representatives of government ministries participated in the colloquium.

The aim of the colloquium was to formulate a set of resolutions on the role of the English language in Malaysia to be delivered to the Minister of Education, Malaysia.

The discussion during the colloquium focused on two broad areas: the role of the English language in Malaysian education, and building private-public partnerships to enhance this role.

MELTA, as a national organization which focuses on the development and enhancement of English language teaching in Malaysia, is pleased to present the following resolutions that were formulated during the colloquium.

The members of the colloquium affirmed:

THAT Bahasa Malaysia is the language of national unity and national identity for all Malaysians. In tandem with this position, the members believe that the English language plays a significant role in the enhancement of the economy and international-level political initiatives, as well as in the promotion of intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication. Thus, the English language plays a complementary role to Bahasa Malaysia in the process of nation building.

The members of the colloquium believe that the responsibility of upholding the above position lies with all Malaysians. Therefore, the members of the colloquium firmly resolved:

1. THAT the Malaysian Ministry of Education makes a concerted effort to encourage a high standard of English among practitioners and administrators involved in English education. To this end, the Ministry of Education should:

- implement policies that require a high level of English language proficiency for entry into tertiary institutions and into the teaching profession.
- select properly trained and well-qualified teachers for the teaching of the English language in all schools, especially rural schools, and in tertiary institutions.
- provide adequate training for all teachers and administrators for the purpose of upgrading their English language proficiency.
- provide more time for the teaching of English in schools.
- ensure that all English language materials selected for use in schools are of high quality and are error-free.
- provide incentives to schools that do well in the English language during public examinations.
- allow public universities to offer undergraduate programmes for students who wish to study in English.
- encourage, through grants, subsidies and scholarships, the use of English in generating knowledge and in producing written works of knowledge and literature.
- collaborate with private institutions for the purpose of research, sharing of expertise and curricula development.
- ensure better coordination between various bodies within and outside the Ministry.
- set up a think-tank of local and foreign experts, professionals, parents, industry representatives and NGOs to provide input on issues related to English language curricula and policy.

2. THAT the teaching community, which includes teachers, lecturers and administrators at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, be proactive and supportive of the initiatives proposed by the Ministry of Education towards the development of the English language. To these ends, all teachers, lecturers and administrators should:

- act as role models in using English and in exhibiting a positive attitude towards the language.
- be proactive and innovative in the promotion of government directives and policies.
- make a conscious attempt to frequently upgrade their knowledge as well as their competence in English.
- actively involve students of lesser proficiency in co-curricula programmes by designing activities specific to their needs and abilities, in addition to existing programmes.

3. THAT corporate organizations attempt to intervene at the primary and secondary school levels so that they can contribute to the development of a linguistically competent workforce. Thus, these organizations should:

- provide financial support for upgrading English language proficiency in all schools.
- support school-based programmes that provide young learners with more exposure to English.
- collaborate with schools to provide young learners with greater exposure to the corporate world and to the use of English in such settings.
- aid the Ministry of Education's attempts to ensure equal distribution of resources and access to information between advantaged and disadvantaged schools.

4. THAT members of the written and audio-visual media make a deliberate attempt to promote the accurate and appropriate use of English. To these ends, the media should:

- use, and depict Malaysians using grammatically appropriate English.
- participate in and support public and private endeavours to promote the language.

5. THAT the general public is also responsible for the upgrading and promotion of the English language by displaying and nurturing a positive attitude towards the language. To these ends, the general public should:

- provide more encouragement for the promotion of English language programmes both in and outside schools.
- act as role models by using English wherever it is appropriate.
- promote English as an essential international language.

The undersigned participants of the colloquium hereby forward the above resolutions for your consideration with the fervent hope that these deliberations will aid the future development of the teaching of English towards building a stronger and more unified nation.