



Sabah, Sarawak can maintain English for official use, says minister

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PETALING JAYA: Entrepreneur development and cooperatives minister Ewon Benedick says the federal government has approved the continued use of the English language for official matters in Sabah and Sarawak.

He said the decision was reached at a recent Cabinet meeting and is in line with the state constitutions of Sabah and Sarawak, which permit the use of English in various official proceedings, including court sessions and state legislative assemblies, *Berita Harian* reported.

This announcement comes less than a month after Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim issued a directive stipulating that all official correspondence for government affairs, including those from the private sector, must be conducted in Malay, with the exception of communications from international companies.

Ewon said the use of English will not diminish the status of Malay as the national language, but will instead enhance the language skills of local children and enable them to become proficient in international languages.

"The Cabinet has concurred that English may be utilised in official matters in Sabah and Sarawak, consistent with the constitutional provisions of these two states that acknowledge the use of the English language," he added.

Previously, Anwar's directive had prompted a response from the Sarawak government, which asserted its intent to continue using English for official communications.

Sarawak state secretary Abu Bakar Marzuki said the directive mandating the use of Malay for all official matters does not apply to the state.