

# 'Shallow-minded' champions

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**The Bahasa Malaysia is our mother tongue and our language; it does not mean that if we speak English we are less Malay.**

*Professor Datuk Seri Dr Ibrahim Abu Shah*



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the university's unemployed graduates Mustapa had said that the university had only a small number of unemployed graduates compared with other public universities because it produced top graduates who were marketable and spoke good English.

UiTM, which was set up to provide higher education for Bumiputera students, currently has an enrolment of 90,000 students in its campuses nationwide.

Formerly known as the Mara Institute of Technology (ITM), UiTM is a firmative action university which

comes directly under the government.

"Besides English, we also encourage our students to learn a third language like Mandarin or Japanese," Ibrahim said.

He said the university produced about 30,000 graduates a year and they were trained to adapt to the job market.

"We only offer professional courses and most of these courses emphasise the need for English. For weak students who come from rural areas and do not have a good grasp of the language we provide them with an inten-

sive six-month course prior to their diploma and degree courses," he said.

Ibrahim said this was only applicable to students who did not get a credit for English in their Matriculation or Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination.

"This method has worked well for students who do not have an English-speaking background," he said.

The university also encourages students to speak English by holding an English language month or week.

"During this period, if they are caught speaking in Malay, they would be fined," he said, adding that most lectures were also conducted in English.

Ibrahim said the use of English in lessons had been part of the university's system since ITM's inception in 1956. "Our programmes are mostly based on American programmes and that is why most of our students speak American English," he added.

He said many UiTM graduates were holding top positions in the country as the university had emphasised on entrepreneurship skills as well.

Ibrahim said 80 per cent of the chief executive officers of plantation companies and 52 per cent of the total number of professional accountants in the country were UiTM graduates.

■ **By June Ramli**  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Those who believe that learning English will make a person less Malay have been lambasted as "shallow minded".

The criticism from Universiti Teknologi Mara vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Seri Dr Ibrahim Abu Shah was aimed at those who had in the past voiced their opposition to public universities teaching more subjects in English.

Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka was among those who had said that such a move would cause Bahasa Malaysia to lose its status as the country's official language.

"The Bahasa Malaysia is our mother tongue and our language; it does not mean that if we speak English we are less Malay," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Ibrahim said English was an important language in view of the globalisation taking place.

Last week, in the Dewan Rakyat, Member of Parliament for Kuala Krai Ismail Mohamed Said had asked Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed for the current statistics on