

# MEIREK ASSOCIATION MULLS PRESERVING ITS MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGE

03 June 2016

- The Borneo Post Online

MIRI: Meirek language, one of the world's oldest spoken languages, will be documented in an effort to preserve the language for the future generation's reference.

The Miri Jatti Meirek Association (MJMA) president, Datuk Abdillah Abdul Rahim said the association was in the midst of working with Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) and Miri Library (Pustaka Miri) for that purpose.

“It is our hope that the cooperation between MAMA, Unimas, DBP and Miri Library can assist us in elevating the Meirek language and culture,” he said in a statement here yesterday.

The statement was in conjunction with its 13th triennial General Meeting held at the association's premises on Wednesday.

Abdillah said the association was planning to gazette the Meirek language once the documentation was completed.

Jatti Meirek is one of the oldest community in the country and the community was said to have landed in Sarawak about 200 or 300 years ago and the name Miri is said to have originated from the word, ‘Meirek’, whose population is said to number more than 10,000 residing mostly in northern Sarawak and Brunei.

For the record, an academician has expressed fear that the Meirek language, being the language of a minority group in Southeast Asia, could become extinct due to the shrinking number of those speaking the language, especially the younger generation.

James T Collins, a renowned linguistic expert from the Institute of the Malay World and Civilisation, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, in his paper at a seminar in Miri in 2005, had said this was also largely due to there being no official documentation on the language. — Bernama