

MOTHER TONGUE POWERFUL TOOL FOR LEARNING — ADENAN

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Uggah (third right) visiting a booth at MIPCE II.

SANTUBONG: The mother tongue is a powerful resource for learning, and the longer it is used in a significant way, the better.

Using it is not a backward step, but can be a big step forward, said Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Adenan Satem.

In a speech read by Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas, Adenan said if we truly believed that cultural heritage and indigenous languages are resources to be used and not problems to be avoided, we will need to take some steps.

“We will need more indigenous teachers. We will need to assign them to teach in their own communities. We will need to look into adapting our curriculum to make it more flexible and inclusive regarding

language use. We need to establish pilot schools that use the mother tongue first and build upon that foundation,” he said.

Adenan pointed out that Iban, Semai and Kadazandusun languages were already school subjects.

“Why not use them as the language of instruction, at least for some subjects? We need to study and see how it can be done, to learn from successful programmes elsewhere.”

He added that it was very heartening to note that the advocacy to promote and teach mother tongue languages among the ethnic communities had started and was beginning to bear fruit.

Uggah was officiating at the Second Malaysian Indigenous Peoples’ Conference on Education (MIPCE II) at Damai Beach Resort on behalf of the Chief Minister yesterday.

MIPCE II is a follow-up to the first-ever conference on the education of indigenous people of Malaysia in 2007.

Held from September 20 to 22, MIPCE II is a platform and space for experts and practitioners to share experiences, ideas and aspirations, as well as provide policy recommendations for future directions of indigenous education in the country.

The theme ‘Bringing languages, culture and peoples together’ will cover documentation and preservation of indigenous languages and culture, policy development and implementation, curriculum and material development, and teaching and teacher education.

Also present were Youth, Sports and Solidarity Minister Dato Sri Michael Manyin, who is also Dayak Bidayuh National Association (DBNA) advisor; Federation of Orang Ulu Association advisor Datu Gerawat Gala; MIPCE II organising chairman and DBNA president Datu Ik Pahon Joyik, MIPCE I Chairman Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Pandikar Amin Mulia; and United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef) representative to Malaysia Marianne Clark-Hatting.

According to Ik Pahon, the conference attracted a total of 282 participants.

The conference is jointly organised by the State Planning Unit, Chief Minister’s Department, Dayak Bidayuh National Association (DBNA), United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef) Malaysia, Sarawak Native Customs Council, Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF), SIL Malaysia, Pacos Trust, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (USM), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) and Sarawak Convention Bureau.