

UiTM Perlis, UniMAP Takes Initiative to Teach Malay Language in Thailand

PHUKET 31 Jan. - Because of their wish to see the Malay language to be further developed and regain its status as a regional lingua franca, two public universities in Perlis has taken the initiative to teach the language at two schools in the provinces of Phuket and Phang Nga.

The two districts are among 15 Andaman provinces located in the southern region of the country and no longer uses the Malay language in their speech.

The travel distance of 500 kilometres separating them was not an obstacle for both universities, namely Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Perlis and Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP), to fulfil their wish.

Subsequently, UiTM Perlis adopted Muslim Wittaya School here as a foster school while UniMAP adopted Fahad Wittaya School in Phang Nga.

UiTM Perlis Campus Deputy Rector (Student Affairs) Zailuddin Ariffin said for starters five lecturers from the university's Academy of Language Studies were sent to Muslim Wittaya School to teach 30 language teachers in five days on 27 December last year.

“We used informal teaching methods and it was surprising that teachers here were able to learn the Malay language even without any basic knowledge of it.

“Among the methods employed were visual dictionaries, Sahibba game, poster and Malay songs,” he said after the Malay language learning programme inauguration which was officiated by the Raja Muda Perlis, Tuanku Syed Faizuddin Putra Jamalullail at the Wittaya Muslim School yesterday.

Also attending the programme, which had the cooperation of the Perlis Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council (MAIPs), was Raja Puan Muda Perlis, Tuanku Hajah Lailatul Shahreen Akashah Khalil.

Attendees were entertained by primary and secondary schoolchildren who sang *Rasa Sayang Eh* and *Kalau Rasa Gembira* during the programme.

Zailuddin further explained that the school management cooperated closely with them and scheduled two hours of Malay language learning sessions a week by four teachers.

He said that this was a positive development and they will plan further to continue the programme by inviting the teachers and schoolchildren to Perlis to learn the Malay language.

“We feel elated because the Muslim residents here are interested in learning the Malay language and this will help forge closer ties among Muslims,” he said.

Meanwhile, Prof. Dr. Harshita Aini Haroon, the Director of UniMAP Centre for International Languages said that her department also employs a similar concept

when a few lecturers were sent to Fahad Wittaya School to teach the school teachers the Malay language recently.

“This was the first time our lecturers taught Malay as a second language because a large number of the populace cannot converse with it,” she said.