

Malaysian envoys shy and lack soft skills

KUALA LUMPUR: Forget about learning a foreign language. Or, even making Malaysia stand out.

Most of our diplomatic officials attached overseas not only lack skills in public relations, but also are too shy when meeting with officials from other countries.

This assessment comes from none other than Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) executive chairman Tan Sri Hasmy Agam.

He said, lack of fluency in English was also one of the factors that had hampered Malaysian officials from communicating effectively with their foreign counterparts on policies and matters important to the country.

"Most of our diplomatic officials, whether from the foreign ministry or other ministries, are too shy to speak up or make presentations, especially at multilateral diplomacy and their command of English is poor," he said at IDFR's media briefing here today.

Hasmy has been a career diplomat and served as ambassador in many countries, including France and Libya. He also served as Malaysia's permanent representative to the United Nations, Permanent Mission of Malaysia in New York from 1998 to 2003, before he retired and assumed his current post at IDFR in 2007.

He noted that diplomats from countries such as Vietnam, Thailand and even China were aggressively polishing up their English, as it was still considered the top language of diplomacy worldwide.

"I think these needs to be addressed, because if not, it is our country that will be losing out."

In view of this IDFR plans to conduct a comprehensive programme to train government officials scheduled to be posted overseas, in areas such as public speaking, public relations, cultures and confidence level.

"We plan to have such courses for our officials...at least, it helps to boost their self-confidence and allow them to function more effectively abroad," he explained.

-- Bernama

