

Malaysian diplomacy officials lack PR skills

KUALA LUMPUR: Most Malaysian diplomacy officials attached overseas not only lack skills in public relations, but are also too shy when meeting with officials from other countries.

Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) executive chairman Tan Sri Hasmy Agam 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.

"Our diplomacy officials, whether from the foreign ministry or other ministries, most of them are too shy to speak up or making presentations, especially at the multilateral diplomacy, and their level of English has dropped," he told reporters at IDFR's media briefing here today.

Hasmy has been a career diplomat and served as ambassador in many countries, including France and Libya, as well 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 in countries such as Vietnam, Thailand and even China, were aggressively polishing up their English, as it was still considered the top most diplomacy language worldwide.

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

He added, in view of that, IDFR planned 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 added.

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