

Aaron: Preserve ethnic languages as agent to strengthen racial unity

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KOTA KINABALU: Ethnic languages are national heritage treasures that must be preserved so that they are not lost and can be inherited by future generations, said National Unity Minister Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang (*pix*).

He said this was because languages are not only a heritage but also an agent for strengthening unity between races and ethnicities in this country, adding that when people of diverse backgrounds understand the language used by each other, it fosters understanding.

He said Sabah itself has 33 indigenous groups communicating in 50 languages and 80 ethnic dialects.

“As such, the organisation of language-speaking programmes is one of the proactive measures to dignify the language as well as elements of tradition, art and culture in this country.

“The organisation of this programme will help elevate and dignify the elements of tradition, art and culture in general and language in particular as an agent of racial unity in this country,” he said.

Aaron said this in a statement after the launch of the “Bahasa Kolokial: Melestarikan Keberdayaan Bahasa Komuniti Telusuri Bayu Kinabalu” programme here today.

He said the implementation of the programme was in line with the ‘Ini Warisan Kita’ (This is Our Heritage) initiative carried out by the Ministry of National Unity and implemented through Arkib Negara (National Archives) in collaboration with the Sabah branch of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP).

A total of 250 people participated in the one-day programme aimed at providing exposure to the use of colloquial languages among ethnic groups in Sabah, in addition to documenting this unique culture to be used as reference and research material, he said.

Aaron said the ministry also planned to publish a special book on Colloquial Languages next year as part of efforts to preserve the strength of community languages in the country. -*Bernama*