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# Canada-Asean

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## STANDARDIZING THE KADAZAN LANGUAGE

A significant percentage of the population of the Malaysian state of Sabah uses three of the 20 Kadazan dialects spoken by Sabah's indigenous people. Despite this fact, basic education, health and public services are usually not provided in the vernacular.

This problem will soon be remedied, as under Malaysia's language legislation, Kadazan is to be taught in Sabah's primary schools from 1990. A curriculum and resource material must be developed now so that teachers may be trained before this deadline. The biggest hurdle facing educationists is that although most of the 20 dialects are mutually intelligible, there are no standards for written Kadazan.

The Canadian High Commission recently contributed \$12,000 to the Kadazan Cultural Association to facilitate a symposium on the standardization of the Kadazan language. More than 90 people participated in the symposium, including linguists, researchers, educators, agricultural workers, health and social development officers, journalists and politicians.

Standardization will facilitate the provision of rural extension programs and develop a greater sense of unity among the Kadazan people, who are in danger of losing their cultural heritage in which their rich oral tradition figures prominently. The symposium was designed to lay the groundwork for language standardization, including agreeing on a common dialect and developing methods for its extension.

Canada has a great deal of experience with the challenges of cultural diversity, and has much to share with and learn from Malaysia.



*Y.B. Datuk Bernard Dompok, Minister of Finance, Sabah State Government, and Organizing Chairman Mr Wilfred Tangau at the Kadazan Language Standardization Workshop*

## Ministers of Education Meet in Malacca

On January 12-13, 1989, Ministers and senior officials of Ministries of Education from member countries of SEAMEO — the South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organization — and from observer countries met in Malacca, Malaysia. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the vital issues facing international education. The meeting was chaired by Mr Anwar Ibrahim, the Minister of Education, Malaysia.

The Canadian delegation was led by Mr Loyola Hearn, Minister of Education of the Province of Newfoundland. Also included were representatives of the Department of External Affairs, the Association of Universities and Colleges and the Association of Community Colleges of Canada.

SEAMEO operates a number of centres and projects in member countries. Regular conferences are held to update members on the progress of these projects and discuss avenues of cooperation.

Canada has traditionally taken a keen interest in international education, and has taken great pride in the high standards of instruction it offers to increasing numbers of foreign students every year. SEAMEO is one of the many avenues by which Canada shares its education expertise with the countries of South-East Asia.