

Pairin calls for more publications to keep native languages alive

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Paitin visits an exhibition booths.

KOTA KINABALU: More publications in Kadazandusun and other indigenous languages are needed to keep native tongues alive and pass them on to future generations, said Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA) president Tan Sri Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

Officiating the Borneo Cultural and Heritage Corner (BCHC) at the Kota Kinabalu International Book Fair 2026 at the Sabah International Convention Centre (SICC) on Friday, Pairin said more young writers must be encouraged to document folk stories and traditional knowledge.

At the event, he launched 25 Kadazandusun children's books produced through a collaboration between Institut Pendidikan Guru (IPG) Kampus Kent, Tuaran, and the Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF), involving trainee teachers under lecturer guidance.

Pairin stressed that the modest initiative carried significant meaning, noting that keeping a language alive requires active usage at home, in schools, and in daily communication starting from an early age.

He said children need reading materials in their mother tongue to build identity and cultural pride, serving as a bridge between language, heritage, and education.

While Sabah is blessed with rich ethnic and linguistic diversity, he cautioned that heritage will not survive solely because it existed in the past, but only if it is documented, taught, used, and passed on.

He noted that the younger generation can only inherit cultural identity, stories, and language if the present generation leaves those non-material legacies behind for them.

He added that preserving heritage is a shared responsibility among the government, educational institutions, cultural bodies, publishers, parents, and community leaders.

Present were Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) Professor Datuk Dr Rossita Shapawi, KLF Board of Trustees chairman Datuk Philip Lasimbang, and IPG Kampus Kent director Dr Norafidah Noralidin.