

# Tangau calls on KDM community to protect the language

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**TUARAN:** The teaching of Bahasa Kadazandusun in government schools, which was granted after an exhaustive battle, must be preserved and strengthened further.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Wilfred Madius Tangau said, "Bahasa Kadazandusun is now learnt at the highest level despite its troublesome beginning. Bahasa Kadazandusun is here to stay; we have to protect it, this is our task, such is our prayers."

He said: "It's a fact that the journey for our mother tongue to become a subject learnt in school was very tough mainly due to political polemics. More so, we must now ensure, vehemently, that it is not disturbed or be taken for granted."

"A concerted effort must be solidified and every initiative counted to bring the teaching of Bahasa Kadazandusun to greater heights," added Tangau.

The UPKO President said these when asked to elaborate on his forceful and rather emotional closing ceremony speech at the Seminar Serantau Bahasa, Budaya dan Sastera Masyarakat Kadazandusun Tahun 2019 at the IPG KENT, here on Thursday.

Asked whether the fiery speech was because there seemingly was movement to do away with the teaching of Bahasa Kadazandusun, Tangau said matter-of-factly:

"Yes! Little birds whispered to me that there were efforts to replace the Bahasa Kadazandusun. Make no mistake about it, we will safeguard the program. We must all protect it."

In his speech, Tangau narrated how as Kadazandusun Cultural Association (KDCA) Language and Literature Bureau chief, he organised a symposium in 1988 that resulted in only one



**Tangau... duty bound to safeguard Bahasa Kadazandusun.**

resolution, which was to come up with a standardised mother tongue to be taught in school.

There was hardly any ethnic-based association then thus the symposium was attended by ethno linguistic representatives carefully selected by the bureau based on an ethno linguistic map done by the Summer Institute of Linguistics of the United States who had done a comprehensive research on the mother tongue in Sabah.

Due to political polemics, nothing concrete happened though not for the lack of efforts until 1994 when then Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Bernard Dompok presented the proposal in the Federal Cabinet.

The submission fell on listening ears due largely to the fact that the Minister of Education then was a Sarawakian, Tan Sri Dr Sulaiman bin Daud, who accepted it on condition that there be unified decision by the community which was represented by the KDCA and United Sabah Dusun Association (USDA).

However, it was easier said than done because KDCA president, Huguan Siou Tan Sri



**Tangau during the closing ceremony of the seminar.**

Joseph Pairin Kitingan is of different political alignment with USDA president, the late Datuk Mark Koding.

"Benedict (Topin) and myself had a very difficult time to persuade the KDCA and USDA to come to an agreement, and later even harder to get Tan Sri Pairin and Datuk Mark to sign the unified stand.

"They eventually put their signatures, at different times and at different venues," said Tangau, adding it was compounded because they needed also the signatures of the associations' respective secretaries general namely Datuk Wilfred Mojilip Bumburing and Raymond Boin Tombung.

"The agreement was on three things, namely that the mother tongue shall be named Bahasa Kadazandusun, and that the dialects of Bundu and Liawan or Bunduliwan be the base. Secondly, it would have to be enriched with vocabulary from other dialects from the Dusunic language family.

"Thirdly, the decision to pick Bunduliwan was based on the dialects being the most commonly used by the natives and used in most districts."

Tangau, a life member of KD-

CA, said apart from the standardisation of the language, his bureau's other project was to come up with a Bahasa Kadazandusun dictionary.

The then UPKO president, Bernard Dompok, set up the Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF) that initiated a pilot project on the teaching of the Bahasa Kadazandusun in school.

The language was finally taught in primary schools beginning 1997 while the then Sabah Chief Minister Bernard Dompok set up the Kadazandusun Chair in UMS in 1998.

"Much later Dompok also launched the Bahasa Kadazandusun as a minor subject in Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris (UPSI), and the rest as they said, is history," added Tangau.

Hundreds of teachers had since graduated with degrees in Bachelor of Education in Bahasa Kadazandusun from UPSI, IPG Kent, IPG Keningau, SIDMA College and many more.

The language had since become an elective subject for the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination.

"We would never have this seminar if not for the efforts by KDCA 31 years ago, the perseverance by leaders like Tan Sri Bernard and the good re-

lationship with Putrajaya.

"I dreaded to think what would have happened to Bahasa Kadazandusun had it not been taught in schools then. We are born Kadazandusun, we have to ensure our mother tongue lives on. We all are duty bound to do so," he stressed.

The seminar came up with 11 resolutions as take away from 30 academic presentations.

Among those present were UMS deputy vice chancellor Prof Madya TS Dr Ramzah Dambul, Dr Romzi Ationg, Deputy Dean of UMS' Pusat Penataran Ilmu dan Bahasa, UMS, the Kent deputy director Doti Asing, UMS Kadazandusun Chair holder, Prof. Madya Dr Andreas Totu, State Education Department Desk Officer for Kadazandusun Language, Sitiamah Sahat, and joint chair persons Nand Prof Dr Madya Jane Wong Kon Ling.

Also in attendance were representatives from KLF, PACOS TRUST, KDCA, KSS, USDA, Persatuan Bangsa Tombonuo Sabah, Persatuan Suang Lotud Sabah, Persatuan Murut Sabah, Persatuan Bisaya Bersatu Sabah, Persatuan Kebudayaan Tatana Sabah, Pertubuhan Kimaragang Sabah, Kolej Sidma, and PDIS.