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Ministry Engages 490 Students to Preserve Javanese Language at Central Java FTB

Semarang Regency, Oct. 11, 2026 — Mother tongues will remain alive only if younger generations continue to use them, rather than merely recognizing them as cultural heritage. Therefore, fostering children's affection for regional languages forms an essential part of education. Through the 2026 Central Java Provincial Mother Language Festival (Festival Tunas Bahasa Ibu, or FTBI), the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) has invited children to preserve the Javanese language through activities close to their daily lives, including writing, storytelling, poetry reading, singing, and comedy.

A total of 560 participants from 35 regencies and cities across Central Java—comprising 490 elementary and junior high school students along with 70 chaperones—participated in the festival, which was organized by the Central Java Provincial Language Office on Oct. 9–11, 2026. The students are first-place winners of regency- and city-level FTBI competitions who advanced to the provincial level.

Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Abdul Mu'ti emphasized that preserving regional languages requires more than just school-based instruction. The habit of using Javanese must be cultivated in daily life, including within family environments.

"It is not enough for Javanese to simply be a local content subject in our school curriculum; making it a habit to speak Javanese at home, in the community, or in various forums is a crucial part of preserving our regional languages," said Minister Mu'ti.

According to Minister Mu'ti, personal experience can also serve as a reminder of the importance of passing down languages to children. He shared that he had stopped using the language for quite some time. Realizing that his own children were not accustomed to speaking Javanese, he began teaching it to them again. This demonstrates that language transmission requires active participation from parents, not just schools.

Central Java Vice Governor Taj Yasin Maimoen highlighted the values embedded in the Javanese language. He explained that regional languages do not merely teach people how to speak, but also introduce proper etiquette and manners in social interaction. "The Javanese language does not only teach us how to speak. Within it lie *unggah-ungguh* [politeness] and moral character," Taj Yasin stated.

He also reminded the public of the importance of maintaining the habit of speaking Javanese amidst modernization and the overwhelming influence of media. The diversity of dialects in Central Java—ranging from the North Coast (*Pantura*) region to areas utilizing the *Ngapak* dialect—represents a wealth of language that needs to be nurtured.

Hafidz Muksin, Head of the Language Development and Cultivation Agency, noted that regional languages hold a vital position in safeguarding national identity and passing cultural values down to future

generations. “Regional languages are certainly not just tools for communication, but serve as repositories for noble values, identity, and national character,” he said.

This message is manifested through seven competitive categories in the FTBI: writing and reading Javanese script, reading *geguritan* (traditional poetry), writing *cerkak* (short stories), storytelling, delivering a speech (*sesorah*), singing *macapat* poetry, and stand-up comedy (*dhagel ijen*). Through these activities, students find a space to develop their language and literary skills while expressing their creativity.

The FTBI serves as the culmination of the regional language protection and revitalization program organized by the Central Java Provincial Language Office since 2021. This initiative includes training for Javanese language teachers, teaching dissemination across 35 regencies and cities, and organizing tiered festivals leading up to the provincial level.

These preservation efforts have also yielded notable achievements. In 2024, the Central Java Provincial Language Office, together with the Jepara Regency Government, set a MURI (Indonesian World Records Museum) record by writing noble advice (*pitutur luhur*) using Javanese script on 3,386 lontar palm leaves. In 2025, alongside the Surakarta City Government, the office once again earned a MURI record through the simultaneous writing of *geguritan* by 1,120 elementary and junior high school students across Central Java.

The organization of the 2026 FTBI was supported by the Central Java Provincial Government, the Semarang Regency Government, Ngudi Waluyo University, regency/city governments, teachers, communities, and various stakeholders.

The spirit of this festival aligns with the Language Agency’s motto: “Prioritize the Indonesian language, preserve regional languages, and master foreign languages”. The mastery of Indonesian and foreign languages can run concurrently with a love for regional languages as an integral part of cultural identity.

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