

MAHATHIR - WRITERS

BM

EMBARGO: FOR RELEASE AFTER 10 P.M. TODAY, NOV. 20

33 (P)
KUALA LUMPUR, NOV. 20 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TONIGHT A SORRY FATE AWAITS THE MALAYSIAN SOCIETY IF LOCAL WRITERS +IGNORE THE VIBRATIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENTS+ TAKING PLACE AROUND THEM.

HE POINTED OUT THAT IN ANY CIVILIZATION, WRITERS WERE NOT JUST THE SCRIBES FOR THEIR TIMES BUT ALSO THE SETTERS FOR THE TREND OF THINKING OF THEIR SOCIETIES IN MANY MATTERS.

+THIS FACT ALSO HOLDS TRUE IN THE HISTORY OF OUR SOCIETY,+ HE ADDED WHEN LAUNCHING THE BERITA HARIAN LITERARY FELLOWSHIP HERE.

<IT WILL BE MOST UNFORTUNATE FOR OUR SOCIETY IF OUR WRITERS ARE INSENSITIVE TO THE PULSE OF THE DEVELOPMENTS OCCURING AROUND THEM AND INSTEAD DROWN THEMSELVES IN FEELINGS OF SORROW AND HUMILITY.

+IT IS ALSO A GREAT MISFORTUNE FOR US IF OUR WRITERS ARE UNABLE TO PLUMB THE SECRETS AND ENIGMAS OF THE SUCCESS OF OTHER COMMUNITIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR SOCIETY.+ -- MORE

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NOTING THE +INVALUABLE+ CONTRIBUTION OF THE COUNTRY'S WRITERS TO THE MERDEKA MOVEMENT AND THE POST-MERDEKA FULFILMENT, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE PRESENT TIMES ABOUND WITH GREATER CHALLENGES. THIS WAS BECAUSE THE COUNTRY HAD SINCE THEN MADE RAPID STRIDES IN PROGRESS IN A WORLD MARKED BY A RELENTLESS PURSUIT FOR PROGRESS IN A MULTITUDE OF FORMS.

HE SAID IT WAS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL FOR WRITERS TO RECOGNIZE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND APPRECIATE THE FREEDOM GRANTED TO THEM.

+FREEDOM OR THE LIMITS OF FREEDOM WILL HAVE A GREATER SIGNIFICANCE FOR WRITERS IN MALAYSIA WHO OPERATE IN THE UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT AND SITUATION OF A PLURAL SOCIETY WITH ITS DIVERSE RACES, RELIGIONS AND CUSTOMS AND VARYING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STANDARDS,+ HE SAID.

+AT THE SAME TIME, OUR SOCIETY AND COUNTRY ARE EXPOSED TO EXTERNAL DANGERS WAITING FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLOIT THE WEAKNESSES WITHIN US.+

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT IN THIS REGARD, THE INTERPRETATION OF FREEDOM OF WESTERN WRITERS WOULD LEAD TO NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES AND ENDANGER SECURITY IF ADOPTED OR USED AS A YARDSTICK BY LOCAL WRITERS. -- MORE 2105/MB

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HE REGRETTED THAT A SMALL NUMBER OF WRITERS STILL COULD NOT ACCEPT THE TRUTH.

+THEY CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM AS UNDERSTOOD BY WESTERN WRITERS DESPITE BEING AWARE OF THE DELETERIOUS EFFECTS OF SUCH A FREEDOM IN A MULTI-RACIAL AND MULTI-RELIGIOUS COUNTRY LIKE MALAYSIA.+

HE ASKED WRITERS TO PERIODICALLY REMIND THEMSELVES THAT THE 1969 MAY 13 INCIDENT WAS CHIEFLY THE RESULT OF CERTAIN POLITICAL QUARTERS EXULTING IN FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND OPINION TO THE EXTENT OF TRANSGRESSING THE LIMITS ACCEPTABLE TO SOCIETY WITH A PLURAL CHARACTER.

HE STRESSED THAT BECAUSE OF THEIR SPECIAL POSITION IN THE SOCIETY, WRITERS HAD A GREATER RESPONSIBILITY IN PRUDENT USE OF THIS FREEDOM.

THE PRIME MINISTER GAVE AN ASSURANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REGARD FOR WRITERS AS ITS +GOOD FRIENDS+ IN THE FIELDS OF NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT. --- MORE 2125/MB

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+I MYSELF WILL ALWAYS WELCOME CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM AND FEEDBACK FROM WRITERS, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER THEY ARE LITERARY FIGURES OR JOURNALISTS,+ HE SAID.

+SINCE WRITERS ARE GIVEN THE TRUST TO OPENLY ENJOY FREEDOM OF SPEECH, IT IS INCUMBENT UPON EVERY WRITER TO UNDERSTAND THE LIMITS AND BOUNDS OF THE FREEDOM AS WELL AS TO ACQUIRE THE CORRECT PERCEPTION FOR THE SENSIBLE USE OF SUCH A RIGHT.+ -- BER...