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Anwar-Art

ARTISTS CAN DEFINE ASEAN SPIRIT AND IDENTITY, SAYS ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today artists of Asean countries can help define the spirit and regional entity of the regional grouping.

He said Asean countries were moving closer towards integrating into a regional entity and as the process accelerates, Asean self-definition of the entity must be sharpened.

"We have to express and articulate the building blocks of our entity. Mutual interest and the pursuit of prosperity, though temporarily halted, are strong reasons for coming together," he said when opening the Asean Masterworks exhibition at the National Art Gallery here.

The exhibition, where 60 artworks by 60 artists from the Asean member countries are displayed, will be held until Feb 7 and open to the public.

It was originally opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Dec 15 at the Palace of the Golden Horses to coincide with the Asean Summit 1997 but it was then restricted to delegation members attending the summit and special guests.

Anwar said nurturing of a sense of community requires the bond of idealistic ingredients and the quest for these ingredients or their articulation was the task of "our artists".

He said works of artists project the soul of the community and manifest and exteriorize the inward growth of the society.

"Their articulation of this contributes towards a society's self-definition.

"While the artist himself may be interested only in self-expression, that expression helps his society to understand its identity," he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister said contemplating at the paintings of Asean masterworks was like gazing at the soul of Asean in their myriad reflections.

"Our attempt to understand these works is, in a way, our attempt to understand ourselves.

"Thus we owe a profound gratitude to our artists, for they have captured the images of our psychic and inner life," he said.

Also present was Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik.

The exhibition is the brainchild of Tan Sri Ahmad Kamil Jaafar, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister. -- BERNAMA

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