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Mahathir-Theatre

GET RID OF VALUES IMPEDING PROGRESS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 15 (Bernama) -- Certain aspects of life which impede progress and make the country weak should be identified and replaced with cultural values that can contribute to development of the race and preservation of civilisation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The Prime Minister said the people need not copy the moral and value decadence afflicting Western civilisation but should instead preserve life values compatible with the local cultures.

At the same time, values impeding progress should be discarded or changed in order to achieve the objective of having a developed race by 2020, he said when opening the RM210 million National Theatre here which has been named Palace of Culture.

"The Malays and other races in Malaysia are undergoing a clear process of cultural transition. The changes being made to the value system are aimed at enhancing understanding of race civilisation in a rapidly changing and evolving world," he said.

Present were Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and other ministers.

Dr Mahathir said old and out-dated cultures could not prevent the civilisations of Malays and other races from being destroyed by more aggressive races and civilisations.

He said changes in life values need not necessarily result in a loss of racial identity but the preservation of cultural and art heritage in certain events, including entertainment, could uphold the identity of a race.

"This Palace of Culture which we open tonight, with its imposing beauty, in itself, from the physical and spiritual aspects, symbolises our development of art and culture so far," he said.

He said it could be a source of inspiration to the people and artistes, writers and playwrights who will be staging art and cultural performances in various forms, whether at the Palace of Culture or elsewhere.

To a race and country, the main theatre symbolised the height of its art and culture in its civilisation, and contributed towards the growth of art and culture so that the passage of time would not wipe out the heritage of the race, he said.

"The identity of a race is not determined by features, ethnic descent or skin colour. What accords identity to a race is its art and culture," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there were three major and old civilisations in the country which spontaneously influenced their respective art and culture without it being realised or planned.

"There is no clash of civilisation in Malaysia. Instead, the inculcation of life, art and cultural values makes the Malaysian community unique," he said.

Dr Mahathir said stage performances gave artistes, writers and playwrights a chance to interpret what happened in the daily lives of the multi-racial Malaysian society through stories and plays.

"Artistes and writers who are sensitive and wise can convey a constructive message to society. Certainly they can contribute to the formation of constructive values that can develop the race," he said.

He said the impact of stage performances cannot be viewed lightly as western culture, especially the British of before, was greatly influenced

by plays based the writings of Shakespeare and playwrights from France and Russia.

"From these plays, despicable and low life values can be compared with noble and high life values," he said.

Saying the people needed a guide on values that should be adhered to and practised, Dr Mahathir hoped that Malaysian writers and playwrights could play the same constructive role.

However, Dr Mahathir hoped that this group would not ape the trend of writing and stage plays in the West which placed no restrictions on expression or outpouring of emotions and desires.

"The family and marriage institution is replaced with free sex and a definition of family which is not connected to legitimate marriage," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Palace of Culture was built by the government but it did not belong to the government.

"It belongs to those who will use it to stage plays interpreting race culture, a culture which is part of our young and fragile civilisation," he said.

He said the government's contribution to the development of local art and culture and consequently civilisation would produce something to see to the success of the race and country.

-- BERNAMA

AR GM YBY