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Infuse myriad of styles into your creations, PM tells local artists

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Local artists should infuse into their creations a myriad of styles and influences manifested in the cultural and artistic creations of the various communities, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

He said it would be unfortunate if they failed to do this as Malaysia was blessed with a rich and wide variety of artistic styles and expressions.

"Being a multi-racial country, we are indeed very rich in cultural variations. Each community - the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans or Kadazans have their own artistic style as reflected in their paintings and other works of art.

"As such, there is a wealth of inspiration for our artists to choose from and to incorporate into their works," he said, when opening the new National Art Gallery building at Jalan Temerloh, off Jalan Tun Razak, here.

Also present were Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, chairman of the gallery's Board of Trustees Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin and diplomats from various countries.

Dr Mahathir said paintings and other artistic creations incorporating all the different traits and characteristics would help to reflect the multi-cultural nature of the country.

"It would also help to show foreigners how culturally rich and diversified we are," he added.

Although some artists had managed to achieve this, Dr Mahathir hoped that more local artists would emulate them.

He also urged local artists to keep repeating what they did as repetition would inevitably lead to improvement.

"If you keep doing something, it can only get better," he said.

As an example, he cited the local dances.

"In the 1960s, the dances were poorly choreographed and unattractive unlike now.

"Similarly, with our artists, their careers and creations were initially not attractive, but now they are recognised.

"Maybe later, if they keep repeating what they do until they attain perfection, they may even gain international recognition," he said.

Dr Mahathir also hoped the new National Art Gallery building would inspire local artists to improve their work to produce masterpieces.

Later, Dr Mahathir opened the gallery by turning artist. He was given an apron and a brush dabbed with acrylic paint which he deftly wielded to draw a caricature of a face which he titled SV on the canvas.

He was also presented with a painting by local artist Johan Marjunid entitled, "Landscape of Tropical Forest of Malaysia".

Before touring the gallery, Dr Mahathir and those present were treated to a spectacular audio-visual display complete with pyrotechnics.

Meanwhile, Abdul Kadir said the new National Art Gallery which was completed and occupied in November 1998, was much bigger than its former premises at Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin.

"It can accommodate more paintings and artistic creations," he said.

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