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Mahathir-Art

LANGKAWI CAN BECOME GLOBAL ART RESORT, SAYS PM

LANGKAWI, Nov 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Langkawi can become a global art resort through the Langkawi International Festival of Arts (Lifa).

He said that the island, already famous as a leading tourist and holiday destination in the country, would be more well known at the international level through its hosting of Lifa.

"This legendary island can also become a global art resort after carving a name for itself in the maritime and air defence industry through the biennial Lima (the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition)," he said when launching the Ibrahim Hussein Cultural Foundation and Museum, here.

He said that the institution and the Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) should therefore join forces in search of quality participation at the international level and also among the local people.

"The success and achievement of our national artists up to the international level can no longer be ignored and their works are now the property and pride of the citizens of the world," he said.

In fact, he said, some of their works had fetched prices amounting to millions of ringgit and this success should be maintained while new talents should be bold in exploring the world of art and be prepared to meet challenges like past generations.

Lifa, organised by the foundation with the cooperation of Lada and the state government is participated by some 100 local and foreign artists from various disciplines. The 10-day festival ends today.

Dr Mahathir expressed hope that the foundation and other institutions of art would be able to place Malaysia as a centre of excellence for arts and culture like other such institutions of world standard.

He said that sophisticated cultural infrastructures like the Istana Budaya (the National Theatre), the Petronas Philharmonic Hall and the National Art Gallery were among the government's contributions to efforts in promoting the arts in the country.

The government also accords recognition to arts activists and culturalists through the National Arts Award Scheme and the Arts Fund Scheme, he said.

Also provided, he said, were corporate and individual income tax exemption on the value of sponsorships, contributions and acquisition of works of art presented to state art institutions.

"The development of society appreciative of the arts should be initiated from now and adopted as part of the art marketing strategy," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that efforts in maintaining the interest of hardcore art lovers and in promoting interest among the new breed of art lovers would go a long way in providing a further boost to the field.

Works of Datuk Ibrahim Hussein and several foreign artists are on display at the museum which was opened to the public in November 1998.

-- BERNAMA

JM NH RM