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Mahathir-City

MAHATHIR ADVISES ASIAN CITIES NOT TO COPY THOSE IN EUROPE, AMERICA

KUALA LUMPUR, April 20 (Bernama) -- Asian cities should preserve their heritage and avoid copying those of Europe and America, said former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We in the East are very fond of copying the Europeans and Americans. Our cities are already becoming copies of their cities, with high-rise buildings, cramped multi-storey flats. There is a McDonald's restaurant at every corner," he said.

Speaking at the International Mayors Forum of China at Weifang City in Shandong province today, he said urban decay was universal in some great cities of Europe and America.

On the other hand, he said, the cities of Asia were relatively new as the decay had not set in yet and the problems had not yet surfaced.

But they all would come and because of the bigger population of the eastern countries, the problems would become bigger, more acute and more insoluble.

Speaking on the subject "The Branding of a City", he said town planners should design a city with specialisations of sub-centres, minimal high-rises and a public transport system that met the needs of the citizens and reduced the use of private vehicles.

The text of his speech was released here.

Dr Mahathir said the architecture of old Asia should be revived to suit present needs.

"Instead of tearing down old towns, we should preserve quite a number of the old city streets lined with wooden shophouses," he said.

He said the city should also be brightened with flowers and colourful plants.

"The city must be landscaped so as to look like a park and some of the cities of China are already doing this," he said.

The parks should be scattered throughout the city, he added.

Dr Mahathir said together with the landscaping, there must be lighting.

Street lights were no longer meant only for lighting but also for beautification, he said.

He said the countryside with its greenery and farms should also be preserved between urban centres.

He suggested that an international competition be held and handsome prizes be given for the best designs and layout incorporating traditional architecture of a city or a country, he said.

He said the branding of cities was more important now than before because modern cities tended to look similar and had facilities that were common.

"It is time that we try to break this monotony. Asia has a rich heritage in culture, architecture, landscaping," he said.

Given the variety of Asian heritage, their cities should look different from each other.

"When cities look different and are different, then branding would be easy," he said.

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