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Dr M: Emulate past literary figures

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The literary community in the country must create and maintain a dynamic equilibrium between preserving national resilience and adapting the positive values of modernisation, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister said those involved in literature should emulate literary figures of the past.

"We can't be too obsessed with the desire to purely uphold resilience while closing our eyes to the reality and changes occurring around us," he said in his speech at Utusan Group's 2002 Literary Awards tonight.

"But we also cannot drift along with the negative values of modernisation while ignoring the positive values of our culture.

"The literary community must create the dynamic equilibrium."

He said that while efforts must be taken to maintain and preserve the rich culture and tradition of the Malaysian community, literary figures should not form a mental block towards certain values of modernisation, especially in how a work of literature is best presented to the people.

"Literary figures in the past had preserved national resilience by strengthening the Malay language and literature although we are still not satisfied with the quality and progress of the Malay language and literature.

"Their second role was to propagate modernisation, that is, to introduce modern values so that the Malays could adapt themselves to progress."

Dr Mahathir said that at present Malay literature was not confined to Malay writers alone as there were many non-Malays who have produced and published excellent literary works in the Malay language.

He said that such literary figures were actually a bridge between the various communities in Malaysia.