

**Authors Need To Be Progressive, Dynamic To Enrich Minds, Says Muhyiddin
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 31 (Bernama) -- The literary fraternity of this era needs to be progressive and dynamic, and produce works that move and enrich minds, said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

He said the time when literary works were characterised by excessive fantasy and beautiful dreams had long gone.

Hence, he said, acquiring knowledge was also crucial in producing works of international standard or could be used as reference by literary researchers.

"Today, authors have considerable room to explore various genres of literature such as novels, poetry, short stories and essays," he said when presenting the Utusan Group ExxonMobil Literary Awards 2010 here.

Muhyiddin said the emergence of young writers from different backgrounds had contributed to diversity of styles, themes and issues as well as produced more creative and quality works.

"The participation of non-Bumiputeras is welcomed as it has indirectly made this contest a platform for all strata of society to enrich their minds, values and messages towards building a unified nation.

"Literary works are great if they are able to make us reflect on life through the use of ordinary words, even touching the soul.

"This is because literary works are like food for the minds which are able to develop a healthy soul and pure mind," he said.

Exposure to Malay literature should be done from school, he said, adding that, "If left to take its own course, eventually Malay literature will be marginalised, not due to influx of foreign literature but due to loss of appeal and relevance."

Muhyiddin said in this era of information technology, literature should not lag behind.

"The literary works in this era should reflect Malaysia as a progressive country. The success in developing the country is not only measured by material achievements, but also by its cultural and intellectual attainment," he added.

He said studying literature as a subject in secondary schools would enable the younger generation to appreciate literary activities as well as enhance the position of the Malay language as the national language.

On the literary awards, Muhyiddin said he was proud that literary works that had won prizes previously had been made compulsory texts in Modern Malay Literature and as reference material in schools.

"Obviously, credit should be given to the writers, especially the literary award winners, who were never tired of writing to produce works that could enhance the field of literature in the country.

"Hopefully, the recognition given to the winners tonight will continue to motivate them to produce quality works," he said. Twenty-nine writers were adjudged winners in six categories contested.

Sri Rahayu Mohd Yusop won the Teenage Novel category for six consecutive years through her novel, "Bima Sakti Menari" and walked away with RM7,000 in prize money.

The winners of the main short stories category were Mawar Safei (Benarlah Kata Angin Itu, dan Saya Meneruskan Perjalanan); Muhammad Lufti Ishak (Orang Budiman dan Negeri Seribu Gunung); and Aminah Mokhtar (Pesta Tarik Tali di Musim Gugur).

The teenage short stories category winners were Amin Minhad (Aku Datang); Nur Adila Abd Rahim (Kala Hujan Ini); and Mohd Ali Salim (Periaku Untuk Ibu Pertiwiku).

Syed Mohd Zakir Syed Othman or S.M Zakir was named the literary feature writing winner while Dr Amida @ Hamidah Abdul Hamid won the literary research category.

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