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SPEECH BY YANG AMAT BERBAHAGIA  
DATIN SERI DR. SITI HASMAH BT HAJI MOHD ALI  
AT THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION  
ON RUPA MALAYSIA: A DECADE OF ART 1987 - 1997  
AT BRUNEI GALLERY, SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES,  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON  
ON THURSDAY, 2 APRIL 1998

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It is an honour for me to be here this morning to officially open the Malaysian Exhibition - Rupa Malaysia: A Decade of Art. I believe this exhibition is a major cultural programme of the Asia-Europe Meeting II that is presently taking place in London. This exhibition is indeed timely as it is the first of such exhibitions to be mounted in Britain in over twenty years, the last being held in 1978 at the Commonwealth Institute.

2. While the leaders at the Asia-Europe meeting deliberate on pressing economic and political issues, we are gathered here today to view contemporary works produced by practising Malaysian visual artists spanning three generations.

3. To be here in the heart of London, a city that is renowned for its arts and cultural activities, can be a humbling experience for any Malaysian artist. But looking around this exhibition, I think we can be proud of our efforts in the field of visual arts.

4. Although progress and material development are important, they are not everything. Equally important is art - which allows you to gaze into the soul of people. I like to think that the art on display in this beautiful space presents Malaysia and her people in many different guises - from village to city, rice fields to factory, beach to mountains.

5. Whilst our nation's artistic tradition is still young and less well-known in London, I think you will find a great deal that is challenging, arresting and thought provoking - thereby, providing an important bridge between East and West.

6. Indeed, there is great diversity in the peoples of Malaysia - the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans from Sarawak and Kadazans from Sabah. Our multicultural world has long existed long before sociologists in their universities invented the word 'multiculturalism'.

7. Besides, there are different religious faiths as evidenced by mosques and temples and churches in Malaysia, reflecting the religious tolerance of the Malaysian Government and society.

8. I should add that all artists, whatever the source of their creativity, are in search of eternal truths which are universal in nature. Such universal truths, I think, underline our existence and teach us that whoever we are and wherever we come from, there is more that binds us together than that which divides us.

9. Malaysia with its multi-ethnic make-up and multifarious traditions, offers our artists a kaleidoscope of subject matter. We are indeed proud and fortunate that our cultural heritage is rich and colourful.

10. I trust that the works in front of you will go some way to explaining who and what we are. I would like to think of this exhibition as an invitation to visitors of this gallery, and indeed to all Londoners to come and see for themselves the world which they have viewed here.

11. Later this year in September, Malaysia will be hosting the Commonwealth Games. This is an honour and privilege for us and we hope you will join in celebrating the occasion. I would like you to look at these paintings and sculptures, to enjoy and be provoked by the images, and then to come and see the real thing.

12. Finally, I wish to congratulate the Brunei gallery, particularly Sir Tim Lankester and his admirable staff for their support and assistance in making this exhibition possible.

13. I also wish to congratulate tourism Malaysia for their support toward the success of this exhibition.

Thank you.

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