

By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR
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Title : UCAPAN PERASMIAN PENGUCAPAN PUISI DUNIA KUALA LUMPUR KE-9

YBhg. Dato' Haji A. Aziz Deraman
Ketua Pengarah Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka

Your Excellencies Distinguished Guests

Yang Berusaha Tuan Haji Hamdan Yahya
Pengarah Jabatan Sastera
Merangkap Pengerusi Pengucapan Puisi Dunia Kuala Lumpur Ke-9

Dif-dif Kehormat

Tuan-Tuan dan Puan-Puan,

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and a very good evening

Syukur Alhamdulillah kerana dengan limpah dan kurnia-Nya kita dapat bersama-sama pada malam yang berbahagia ini. Dengan rasa besar hati saya mengalu-alukan kesemua penyair dari luar negara dan dalam negara. Saya dimaklumkan bahawa bilangan penyair yang hadir adalah lebih ramai daripada tahun 2000. Di samping ini, saya juga amat berbangga kerana sekali lagi dijemput untuk merasmikan Pengucapan Puisi Dunia Kuala Lumpur. Acara yang diadakan ini sewajarnya diterima sebagai peristiwa dua tahun sekali yang penuh bermakna, bukan sahaja di peringkat Kuala Lumpur malahan di dunia. Saya yakin acara ini telah berjaya mewujudkan kerjasama dan perhubungan yang erat antara begitu ramai penyair yang hadir. Dengan ini saya ucapkan setinggi-tinggi tahniah kepada pihak penganjur dan karyawan yang telah memberikan sumbangan pemikiran yang tinggi dan pengorbanan masa yang begitu berharga bagi menjayakan majlis ini. Saya mendoakan kejayaan Pengucapan Puisi Dunia Kuala Lumpur seterusnya pada masa-masa yang akan datang.

Tuan-tuan dan Puan-puan,

Seterusnya izinkan saya berucap dalam Bahasa Inggeris

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all the participating poets of the Ninth Kuala Lumpur World Poetry Reading, especially those who have come from various continents and countries, to Malaysia. I do hope that you will enjoy your short stay with us in Malaysia, and bring home fond memories of our beautiful country and

people. I am very pleased to be given the honour once again, to officially open the 9th Kuala Lumpur World Poetry Reading. This literary event should be regarded as one of the most important and auspicious biennial event, not only for our city of Kuala Lumpur but also for the major cities of the world. I believe, this gathering of poets has contributed and will continue to contribute much towards promoting friendship, goodwill and understanding among all the poets present here and between the countries they represent. May I therefore extend my congratulations to all of you who have devoted much thought and precious time to participate in this project and my best wishes for your increasing success in the future.

I feel privileged to meet with poets who have been invited to the Kuala Lumpur International Poetry Reading. Thank you for your participation. And I would also like to thank the various diplomatic missions in Malaysia for their kind support and assistance to select and sponsor their poets from their respective countries. I hope you will give your continued support to other forthcoming events organized by the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and other organizations in Malaysia in order to bring goodwill and understanding to the world full of conflicts. We all desire to see a world based on humanities, justice and equality that is safe and peaceful for us and our children to live and inherit.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The organizers of this gathering have aptly chosen "Poetry and Our Lives Today" as the ninth's gathering theme. I say apt because poetry is a reflection of our self and society. Through poetry, poets envisage what the "good life" is or what it should be. This is pertinent to the world now, for as we leaf through the pages of our newspapers today or watch CNN or other channels, we see a world full of turmoil, of abuse of human rights, of war and dissension, of corruption and moral degradation, of economic disparity and poverty and of other social ills. We see double standards, selectivity being practiced to suit the dictate of those who are strong and mighty. Is there really human rights, democracy, care for human dignity, as the tendency for hegemony and unilateralism dominate us today.

Everywhere which way we turn, we see "lives being wasted", and even the so-called society conscious governments, could not cope to bring about speedy and comprehensive solutions for these social ills. I would think, they would need a "third eye" so to speak, a conscience, to let governments see, the problems facing society, and that "third eye" I feel, is poets. Poets, with their way with words, may paint their canvass of the world as they see it and as how it should be, or how it should not be, and through their works too, give counsel or advice.

It is our duty to construct and not to destruct. We move with time, or time will leave us. We need all the necessary tools to achieve this laudable objective. We need not be narrow-minded or lose our sense of national pride or patriotism by being open and flexible. We must be willing to master knowledge and use whatever mechanism available for this purpose; so that we will not be left behind or marginalized. They may cheer or jeer, express anger and exasperation, console and comfort, applaud and commend either for the good or the bad. And on the international front, we are

aware that the world can always do with more goodwill and understanding between nations. And as poets you can also contribute better than us towards achieving these aims. You can carry on doing what you do best and contribute to the society. Your voice is loud and impressive to be heard where ever you are. You are needed in our "lives" and in our society today.

In the middle of the 20th century, we were busy dealing with colonialism and post-colonialism. These issues were addressed by many writers in their creative works especially those from the Commonwealth countries. And they were pursued by literary scholars and social scientists. Henceforth, we had post-colonial literature, post-colonial texts which call for changes within the society. Thus cultural change and cultural growth became inevitable. I am sure a few of you poets here, have produced such works, perhaps, by design or otherwise. In Malaysia, we have picked up bits and pieces of our once colonized society, some of which are portrayed in our literary works especially in our poetry. Some of these writers and poets are here with us this evening.

Now we are faced with a new culture or civilization and may I borrow Alvin Toffler's words, we are in the "third wave of civilization". Information literarily rules the world. We see it in the current world situation where globalization and internationalization are the orders of the day and those who control information also controls the world. What do these terms mean to us? How relevant are these terms in the context of literature and particularly poetry. These terms invite you to exchange ideas especially during your international forums. As Chinua Achebe once said "we lived at the crossroads of cultures" and we have different ways of looking at it. But for Achebe, the confluence of cultures creates transcendent, new culture, somehow advanced beyond the sum of its parts. And I am sure, as poets, you too have different ways of looking at life, at society, at the world. Let us not mind the difference, but let us look towards something we can all share together, be it "an English sonnet" or an "elegy", a beautiful Japanese "haiku" or a Malay "pantun", or even our "children's nursery rhyme". After all poetry is in its own way is "information" presented in the finest language a poet may write. From this sharing, the spirit of goodwill, of understanding, will always be nourished. Let us learn from each other on the meaning of "life" as it is today on what it was, what it is and what it will be tomorrow. Poets, I feel, must visualize a better future for us all. Allow me to read a few ending lines of our late renowned Malaysian poet's Usman Awang poem "Greetings from the Continent"

Greetings
Without visa
Passport
Golf
Colours
Humanity for the people
All the continents

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I hope the poets gathered here for the Kuala Lumpur World Poetry Reading 2002 will enjoy their stay here in Kuala Lumpur. I assure you that your host, the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and the people of Malaysia will ensure that your stay will be a memorable one.

Finally, may I wish you all success and happiness during the 9th Kuala Lumpur World Poetry Reading.

Tuan-tuan dan Puan-Puan Sekalian,

Dengan lafaz bismillahirrahmanirrahim, saya dengan sukacita merasmikan Pertemuan Puisi Dunia Kuala Lumpur 2002.