

# PM to Muslims: Regard knowledge as vital to the faith

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KUALA LUMPUR: Muslims must regard all knowledge as vital and enhancing to their faith, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

They would not be able to rebuild Islamic civilisation and would remain in the modern equivalent of the dark ages if they keep dividing knowledge between the religious and the secular.

"And so the first step towards an Islamic Renaissance is to debunk the belief that the world is not for us, that knowledge other than spiritual knowledge is secular and must be proscribed," he said when opening the World Islamic Civilisation Festival at **Pusat Islam**.

The Prime Minister said the great scholars of Islamic civilisation were specialists in many fields and able to relate knowledge to faith.

But in contrast, he said, "Muslims today either know the teachings of Is-

lam exclusively or they are learned in other subjects, equally exclusively, and are unable to relate one with the other."

Dr Mahathir believed this would lead to either spiritual fanaticism or the rejection of religion in those unable to reconcile the two.

"For as long as this dichotomy remains, there will always be a dearth of scholars of subjects which are not specific to the faith among Muslims, thus condemning the Muslims to backwardness and preventing the achievement of a glorious **Islamic civilisation**," he said.

He also noted that Muslims today had to **rely** on the results and **discoveries** of those of other faiths because they were afraid to study all the mysteries of the **world**.

"Today many of us are totally dependent on the results of the **non-Muslims'** application of their **knowledge** for our food, transport, **defence, cloth-**

**TURN TO PAGE 3**

## Islamic civilisation in the modern context

● FROM PAGE ONE

ing and the roof over our heads.

"Indeed, even in the performance of our religious duties we depend on the non-Muslims," he added.

Dr Mahathir pointed out that to recreate an Islamic civilisation was not to copy the life in 7th century Arabia during the **Prophet's** time.

He stressed that building a modern Islamic **civilisation** should be **according** to present-day **achievements**.

It should **reflect** contemporary life and thoughts relevant to mod-

ern times but still be compatible with the teachings of Islam, he said.

Dr Mahathir also said there was a need to establish a workable system of administration and government suitable to Islam and **needs** of modern times.

Modern systems of government, he said, were more in keeping with the **sunnah** of the Prophet than authoritarian governments which existed in the past Islamic **civilisations**.

Dr Mahathir said, however, that these systems developed by non-Muslims should not be accept-

ed wholesale.

It was necessary, he said, to avoid their bad points and **practise** only those which **were** not against the beliefs and values of the religion.

He said a modern Islamic civilisation should show compatibility between **progress** and moral values **and** between religion and worldly concerns.

He also said Muslims should take a lesson from the exhibition of how a great faith could lead to greatness instead of merely basking in the glow of a great past.