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Mahathir-Arts

REVIVE ISLAMIC ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, May 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Islamic arts and architecture which signified the success of muslims should be revived and developed further.

The prime minister said Islamic architecture, which is well-known worldwide, was one of the muslims' successes.

"We should revive, develop and modernise this architecture as well as its craftsmanship and expertise in science which made muslims prosperous," he said when speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony for the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia adjacent to Pusat Islam, here. The museum is Dr Mahathir's brainchild.

He hoped the museum would serve as a referral centre for muslims in Malaysia and at the same time provide an opportunity to foreign countries to see the real Islamic arts.

Estimated to cost between RM30 million and RM50 million, the museum will showcase collections of Islamic arts worldwide and would become one of the educational and restoration centre which would also carry out research and development on Islamic arts and science.

Dr Mahathir said there was a remarkable improvement in the talents of muslims when they embraced Islam as was evident in the Islamic history.

For instance, during the pre-Islamic era, the Arabs were so backward and were looked down upon by others as they did not have the arts which could be held in high esteem, he said.

"But after they embraced Islam, they not only became stronger in terms of administration and military capabilities but their arts also developed and flourished until today to be one of the most popular in the world," he said.

Dr Mahathir said as Islam had given a lot of impact to its followers, muslims should also concentrate on arts as one of their way of life.

The proposed museum would help them understand better the real Islamic arts, he said.

Islam was not only a religion but also a way of life covering all activities of a community and not confined to merely praying, he said.

"We need to eat, drink and wear clothes. We also need satisfaction when seeing beautiful things," he said.

Previously, when mention arts, it would mean drawings in the form of human body and animals but Islam forbids such drawings as more often people would be attracted to the drawings and start worshipping them, he said.

Dr Mahathir said Islamic arts progressed in tandem with the spread of Islam and where ever there were Muslims, they created arts suitable to Islam.

"There are also views that we don't need arts but this is a shallow opinion as human beings need good talents in whatever form and one of it is using their hand and mental skills," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was very important for muslims to prove that Islam did not prevent them from appreciating beautiful items derived from efforts based on Islamic teachings.

"If we don't appreciate it, it will disappear just like that. Our nature and our world will be so empty," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Islam also mould the lifestyle of muslims whose life are surrounded by beautiful things as was found on non-muslims.

The difference is that, there were certain restrictions in Islam but

they were many matters which were not barred by Islam which they could pursue, he said.

Dr Mahathir thanked Albukhary Foundation chaired by Syed Mokhtar Albukhary for financing the 130,000 sq ft museum.

It will be built on the higher plateau of the slopping terrain to impose a monumental presence fronting Jalan Lembah Perdana. -- BERNAMA  
AFY/AH TS