

13/12/1998

Dr Mahathir launches Islamic Arts Museum

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight launched the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia which houses precious Islamic artefacts.

The Prime Minister said the museum would help deepen Muslims' understanding of the religion as well as enable non-Muslims to know more about Islam.

He said Muslims were pioneers in areas like medicine and their writings later became the basis of what is now known as modern medicine, developed by Europeans as later-day Muslims did not follow up on their good works.

"Now that there is this museum, I hope such research can be exhibited," he said, adding that the same applied to pioneering works of Muslims in astronomy.

Dr Mahathir, who mooted the idea of the museum (it was taken up by Yayasan Albukhary), urged Muslims to make exploratory works again in science and technology to revive a spirit which had long waned.

In this context, there was no lack of promise. He said the scientists who developed the nuclear bombs in India and Pakistan were Muslims and many other Muslim experts in electronics were working in the United States due to the lack of facilities in their home countries.

As for non-Muslims, Dr Mahathir said there had been the misconception which associated Islam with extremism and violence, when, in fact, the religion actually valued peace.

With the museum, non-Muslims can understand Islam better, he added.

The collections on display at the museum, including items loaned from Bosnia, Iran and the Sultan of Brunei, are worth over RM100 million.

The main highlight at the launch was the Shahnama Manuscript (Book of Kings), a Persian epic composed by poet Firdawsi in 1010 AD.

Situated in Jalan Lembah Perdana, within walking distance from the National Mosque, Birds Park and the National Planetarium, the museum will be opened from tomorrow at a special promotional rate of RM2.50 for adults and RM1 for school children and senior citizens.

Opening hours are from 10am to 6pm from Tuesday to Sunday and public holidays. It will be closed on Monday.

The Government had signed a concession agreement with Yayasan Albukhary which built the museum and will operate and manage it as a non-profit organisation.

Dr Mahathir also thanked the foundation and its chairman Datuk Syed Mokhtar Albukhary for its willingness to finance wholly the museum's construction and fill it with exhibits.

He said the cost of construction came to about RM70 million.

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