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Master sciences, PM urges Muslims

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last night welcomed the reawakening of interest in science and technology among Muslims.

He said it is time Muslims master the sciences so they could progress, develop and be on par with non-Muslims.

Many Muslims had resisted studying such subjects because they thought the knowledge was not Islamic, Dr Mahathir said at the launching at the Langkawi International Islamic Science and Technology Exhibition Conference 1998 (Listec 98) in Kuala Lumpur last night.

"I hope this exhibition will in some way clear the misunderstanding that scientific knowledge is un-Islamic and secular.

"It is not secular at all. We are encouraged by our religion to study not just the Quran or the Hadith ... but also the world around us ... the mountains, the sea, the trees and the rivers," the Prime Minister said.

Science of course has no religion, he said, and what is oxygen to the Muslims is also oxygen to the people of other faiths, meaning the concept of "Islamic science" does not actually refer to a separate body of knowledge.

However, science has over the years unfortunately become foreign to the Islamic religion, because Muslims failed to continue to seek such knowledge.

In fact, much of the scientific knowledge today is based on the research and work of Muslim scientists in the past, "in medicine, physics, chemistry, navigation, mathematics and others ... fields which are monopolised by non-Muslims today," Dr Mahathir said.

Therefore, instead of viewing science as ideas and knowledge which originated from the Western people, Muslims should master and develop it further as in the past.

"I am sure they will be able to match any of the scholars in the world," he said, adding that he hopes Listec 98 will help Muslims recognise the potential of science and technology, not least in human development.

The conference is jointly organised by the Langkawi Accommodation for Visiting Academics, Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, Malaysia Industrial-Government Group for High Technology and Eeman Consult.

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