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Mahathir-Museum

MUSLIMS URGED TO TAKE LEAD IN SEEKING KNOWLEDGE

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 12 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad opened the Malaysian Islamic Art Museum here tonight with a call to Muslims to regain their role as the explorers of knowledge.

The Prime Minister said the spirit to explore knowledge had long waned among Muslims, causing them to end up as recipients of knowledge from other races, especially from the West.

"It is sad that fields of knowledge like medicine and astrology that were pioneered by Islamic scholars were subsequently neglected by Muslims and taken over by Europeans till this day," he said when opening the RM70 million museum, the first of its kind in the region.

Dr Mahathir said present-day Muslims did not lack ability and wisdom compared to their ancestors, or even people from the West who currently dominated many fields of knowledge.

He said the makers of the nuclear bombs that were tested in India and Pakistan recently are Muslims, and many other Muslim scientists were helping to invent electronic equipment but were working in the United States.

Elaborating on the ability of Islamic intellects, Dr Mahathir said Ibnu Sina had known about many types of diseases when the European race still believed in mystical matters.

In astrology, Islamic scholars had hundreds of years ago successfully explored the outer space to the extent of pinpointing the locations of stars, and this knowledge was being used until today, he said.

"But because we are not sensitive about knowledge and have become recipients of knowledge, we tend to think that modern medical knowledge came from the West when it actually originated from Muslims," he said.

Dr Mahathir said efforts to encourage Muslims to discover knowledge did not mean rejecting knowledge from the West because positive knowledge irrespective of its source could improve human well-being.

He said discovering knowledge would make them better Muslims because it would help them to better appreciate Islamic teachings.

On the museum, he hoped that it would help both Muslims and non-Muslims to better understand Islamic teachings.

"There is too much misunderstanding about Islam, including the notion that Muslims liked to commit murder and violence for no reason, and this museum will help non-Muslims to better understand Islam," he said.

The museum has 22,000 sq metres of exhibition space and is located near the Pusat Islam and Masjid Negara. It was built by the Albukhary Foundation which is also managing it.

Various countries and individuals, including Bosnia Herzegovina, India and Iran and Sultan Hasanal Bolkhiah of Brunei, have lent their collections to the museum for display.

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