

14/07/1998

Muslims `should pursue science and technology'

Ashraf Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Prime Minister said tonight the Muslim world should discard the mistaken notion that acquiring knowledge in science and technology was unIslamic but that a re-awakening in these fields would bring about their continued progress.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Muslims had the potential to become as capable or even better than their non-Muslim colleagues who had excelled in these fields.

He pointed out that what seemed to be a monopoly of wisdom in science and technology of the non-Muslims was actually acquired from learned Muslim scholars during the European renaissance.

"The Europeans went to learn from the Muslims in Spain and in other places. Over time, these knowledge became theirs (the Christians)," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this at the launching of the Langkawi International Islamic Science and Technology Exhibition and Conference.

The conference, to be held in Langkawi in October, is jointly organised by the Langkawi Accomodation for Visiting Academics, Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia and Eeman Consult (M) Sdn Bhd.

Dr Mahathir said while Muslims moved away from science and technology as a result of a strong religious movement which denounced these fields as irrelevant to Islam, the Europeans gained expertise from Muslims and continued to develop them.

He said Muslims then lost sight of these fields of knowledge and this resulted in many people believing that the sciences used by the Europeans actually originated from them (the Europeans).

Dr Mahathir said he was confident that there were many Muslim scholars who would be able to master and explore science just like they did in the past.

He said if this was done, Muslims could equal any scholars in the world.

"We hope that Muslims would now use science in order to develop themselves to a point where they will be on par with their non-Muslim colleagues," he said.

Dr Mahathir said conferences like Listec '98 could reawaken the interest in science and technology for the development of the human race as well as industries and commerce.

The Prime Minister later witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Kedah State Government and various service providers.

They were Utusan Malaysia Bhd, TV3, Malaysia Airlines and Nauticalink Bhd, which provides ferry services and vessel chartering.

The New Straits Times is the official English daily for the exhibition.

Dr Mahathir also launched the Listec '98 homepage. The launching was also attended by Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid and chairman of the organising committee Datuk Mohd Aini Taib.

(END)