

PM: Be open when learning

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'Prepare for life in the modern age'

KUALA LUMPUR: Many brilliant Muslim students are not interested in studying important subjects such as science and engineering because they are told that these are secular subjects, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

In addition, he said those who studied these non-religious subjects were harassed by those who wanted them to devote more time to para-religious activities.

"They are even urged to participate in activities that have nothing to do with their studies, like political agitation and so-called struggles over all kinds of so-called Islamic issues.

"Some are pressured into taking part in clandestine activities said to be in the interest of the religion," he said at the opening of the International Islamic University Malaysia in Gombak near here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said many Muslims were confused about secularism, and regarded anything that was not about the ritualistic expression of the Islamic faith, Islamic laws and Islamic theology as being secular.

This, he said, was unfortunate because it made Islam a reclusive religion and its fol-

lowers incapable of understanding and dealing with anything other than what they perceived as religious.

The favourite approach of those who opposed the acquisition of non-religious knowledge was to accuse the government of being unIslamic, he said.

In some cases, he added, Muslim governments were attacked by urban guerillas and the leaders assassinated.

The result of this, he said, was a severe shortage of Muslim scientists and technocrats, making Muslim countries incapable of mov-

ing up to the level of developed countries.

"The Muslim countries missed the industrial revolution completely. Now they are likely to miss the Information Age and globalisation because they are not prepared for these radical changes in technology and the relation between nations," he said.

Dr Mahathir said all these was because Muslims had forsaken the true teachings of Islam by failing to interpret it as a way of life and interpreting it as a way of death.

"All that is happening to the Muslims of today is due to our

easy acceptance of the teachings which are selective. We propagate only those parts of the religion which we, in our selfishness, want to perform for our own exclusive merit in the afterlife," he said.

He said unless Muslims made an effort to prepare themselves for life in the 21st century, they would be destined to remain oppressed and subjected to all kinds of indignities and miseries.

The IIUM new campus spreads over 288ha area.

The university now has nine faculties and its total enrolment is 15,949 students of which about 1,500 are international students from 96 countries.