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Islamic architecture adopted by many countries, says Dr Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The influence of Islamic architecture is so great that many countries have unconsciously adopted the style as their own, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said this was especially so for countries which had for long periods been under Muslim rule.

"Islamic architecture throughout the world has a regional identity, a stylistic evolution and relevance to the eternal principles of Islam," he said when launching a book at the Islamic Arts Museum.

The book "The Art of Living - Residential Architecture in the Islamic World" is authored by photographer Ovidio Guiata who also took the photographs for the book.

Dr Mahathir said it was amazing that the injunction of Islam against representations of figures of living creatures have not in the least reduced the beauty of Islamic architecture.

"Indeed it has fostered the development of geometrical designs which are even more beautiful.

"It has earned the description 'Arabesque'," he said.

He said the house, in Islamic thought, is a harmonious location in which man becomes one with his inner reality and celebrates the glory of his creator.

Islamic houses, he said, could be considered as living encyclopaedias of a rich religious tradition and share a principal identity deeply rooted in the Islamic faith.

Dr Mahathir said the focus on interior space, as seen in the presence of courtyards, is a distinctively Islamic quality, as are light and water.

The museum is also holding an exhibition on the same theme, featuring a collection of photographs by Guaita highlighting a diversity of architectural edifices.

Guiata, a professional photographer, works for the Italian magazine, Ville Giardini.

He graduated from the University of Florence and continues to collaborate with its Department of Architecture History and Restoration of Architectonic Structure.

The exhibition is open daily except Mondays.

It ends on June 25.

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