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MAHATHIR-CONVENTION

MAHATHIR: SCIENCE HAS A PLACE IN ISLAM

KUALA LUMPUR, July 5 (Bernama) -- There is a need to change the perception that science has nothing to do with religion, especially Islam, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said by considering and using science as part of religious obligations, Muslims would be innovative enough to find ways and means of protecting the ummah.

Dr Mahathir urged the Malays, who are also Muslims, to emphasise more on the study of science and have a more inquisitive mind.

He was speaking at the Science Convention 2001 organised by Institut Ibnu Sina (IIS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), at Seri Kembangan near here.

The Prime Minister stressed that the role of science is important for the country's present and future development.

He noted that developed nations spent a lot of money on research and development (R&D).

As for developing countries, although they are unable to spend as much, they could still carry out R&D and get good results if the R&D is done systematically.

During a dialogue session with participants, who are mostly Muslim scientists, the Prime Minister said that the government will consider providing the necessary allocations to conduct research on sciences.

Concerning grouses that allocations are inclined towards applied sciences rather than fundamental ones, he said the government acted on the proposals given.

On the need to set up more national laboratories to carry out researches, he said he agreed that there should be more laboratories, but the proposals must also come from the scientists themselves.

Meanwhile, IIS UTM has submitted a working paper underlining a strategy that needs to be considered in order to develop the Space Science Studies in Malaysia.

The document was handed to the Prime Minister during the convention.

According to the working paper, the strategy with proposed expenses of about RM94.0 million, will be implemented in several phases in the next 10 years from 2001 to 2010.

Phase 1 (2001-2005) emphasises on the development of human resources and expertise via space science research, while Phase II (2006-2010) will focus application of expertise and experience in aerospace technology, construction, manufacturing and communication.

Phase III (2010-2020) is the most important one, as it is expected that by that time, Malaysia will be ready with enough experts and human resources to build, launch and control satellites to space for various functions ranging from commercial to military purposes.

Three fields of fundamental research to be implemented in Phase 1 and II include atmospheric science, space physics and chemistry and space communication. The three fields proposed consist of 34 research projects.

A total of RM60 million is needed to complete the implementation of the projects for a period of five years, while general purchase of specialised equipments cost RM19.0 million and the building of a space science research laboratory is at RM15.0 million. -- BERNAMA

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