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Mahathir-China

MUSLIMS MORE ADVANCED IF PROPHET'S INJUNCTION OBEYED, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, July 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Muslims would be more advanced today if they had obeyed Prophet Muhammad's injunction to seek knowledge even in China.

The prime minister said the Westerners had become more advanced today because they had gone to China earlier to acquire knowledge and the sciences developed by the Chinese.

"The Chinese (then) had already learnt to make explosives although at that time they used it not to destroy people, but instead to make as much noise as possible in order to chase the dragons or chase the devils.

"Of course the Europeans saw the potentials of the explosives in hurling weapons to greater distances and from that beginning of the acquisition of the knowledge of making explosives, today we see rockets reaching to the moon and the planets and to the other stars," he said when opening the "Six Centuries of Islamic Art In China" exhibition here.

The West, he said, had also learnt the skills of making paper from China.

"Those who acquired knowledge from China stood to gain considerably if they focused on developing it. Unfortunately, not many Muslims followed the injunction of the prophet and they did not go to China to acquire knowledge and therefore they are the losers because of that," he said.

Dr Mahathir believed that the exhibition on the Islamic art in China would open the eyes of many Malaysians, especially the Malays, to enable them to understand why the prophet had enjoined upon the Muslims to seek knowledge even in China.

"Even at the time of the prophet, it must have been obvious that China had already advanced tremendously, that its arts and its sciences had advanced to a stage which was worthy of acquisition by others, and the prophet urged the Muslims to seek knowledge in China," he said.

The exhibition would also provide great opportunities for Malaysians to know about Islam in China and the fact that Islam had been accepted by the Chinese much earlier than it was accepted by the Malays.

"It is going to be a unique experience for us to be able to see some of the art pieces in China actually exhibited in Kuala Lumpur," he said.

The prime minister said the Chinese were also known to be very artistic in producing art objects and they had applied their skills to their acquired faith of Islam.

"Some of the products of the Chinese Muslims in China illustrate the skills of the Chinese as well as their dedication to the new faith that they had acquired," he said.

Dr Mahathir hoped that the exhibition would also help to cement closer relations between Malaysians and the Chinese people.

The exhibition at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia which ends on Oct 28, has on display some 200 artefacts which include historical and cultural documents, crafts, musical instruments and costumes of the minority of the nationalities in China.

It aims to provide an insight into the coming of Islam to China, the comparative influences between the Islamic and Chinese world and the rich cultural diversity of its vast lands.

The exhibition is being held in collaboration with the Museum of Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing and the North West Minorities University, Lanzhou, China.

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